

# **The Dean Smith Years**

**Centenary College — The Four Square Bible Class**


**By Bentley Sloane**







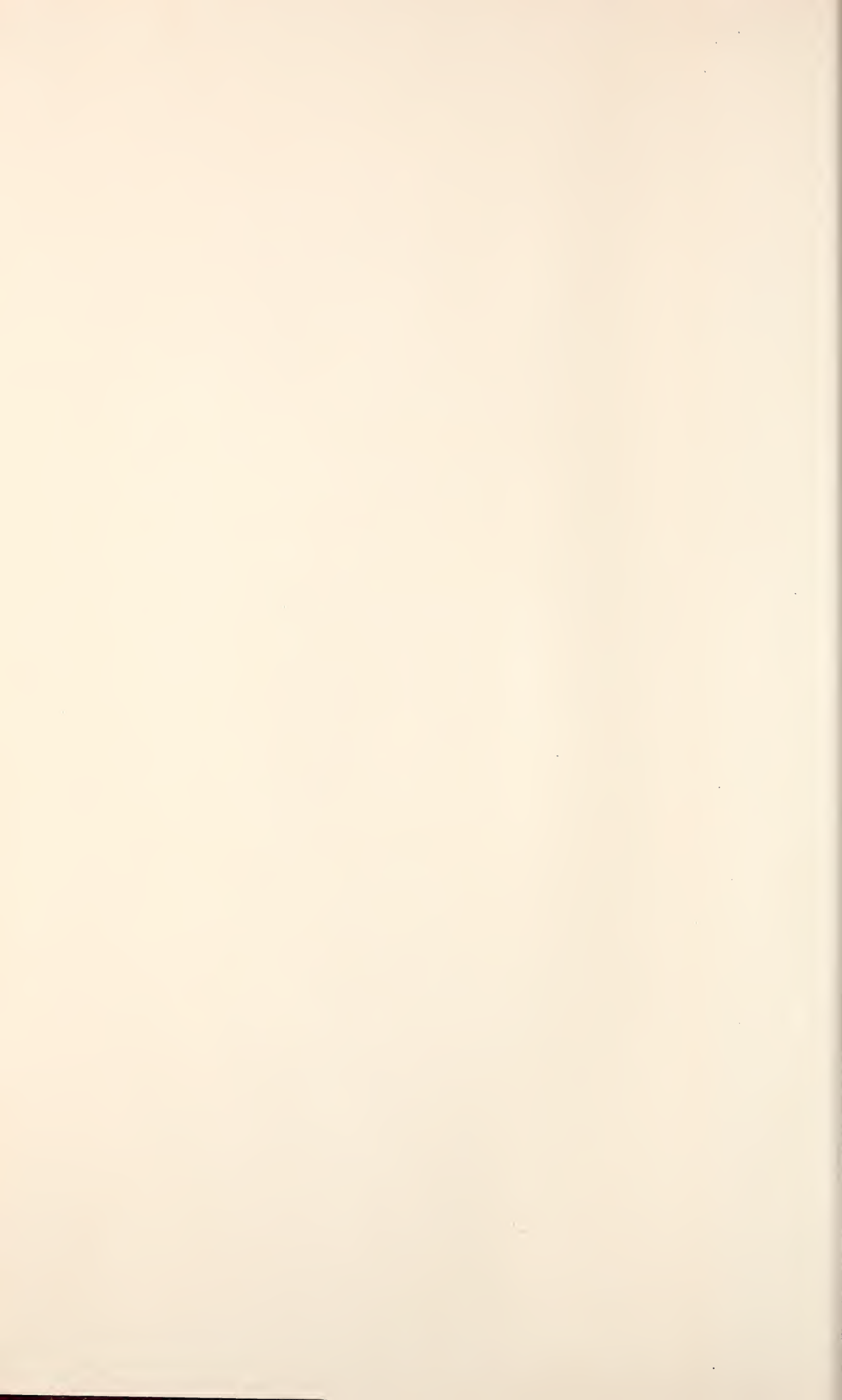




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“When the dust of death has choked  
A great man’s voice, the common words he said  
Turn Oracles.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
Casa Guidi Windows

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**Dean R. E. Smith**

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is composed of some history, biography, and personal recollections. Its focus is on Dean R. E. Smith, but to find him you must go first to Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class. If you want to know more, you must go to Kentucky, to Ruskin Cave College in Ruskin, Tennessee, to Vanderbilt University, to the University of Tennessee, to the University of Chicago, to Asbury College and to Florida Southern College. Last of all, you must go to those who heard him, remembered him, studied under him, and loved him. The writer is one of those.

History deals with people and events in a time sequence. It is also a narration and a chronology. But most of all it is an interpretation of the special events which the historian records.

For an understanding of this interpretative approach to history, we might turn to the arts and the artists. Paul Cezanne, a giant of the French Impressionist School, has written a significant and revealing sentence about art: "Painting from nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one's sensations." The historian does more than copy names, dates, and events; he places himself in the midst of these and records his own sensations. If the author is dealing with events occurring within his life span and within his life space, the story will have an extra existential dimension. The writer was a student in Centenary College in the middle nineteen-twenties under Dean R. E. Smith, was the educational minister at the First Methodist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana, from 1937 to 1943, had offices on the Centenary College Campus for fourteen years while serving as Executive Secretary of the Methodist Board of Education, and now in retirement has returned once again to the campus which he first saw in 1923. He is now a member of the teaching team of the Four Square Bible Class, sharing the work with Charles H. Rollins, who succeeded Dean Smith in 1960.

The title of this book emerged in the author's mind after many months of searching the records of Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class. The chief character of the story and the two institutions with which his life was so deeply involved gave us the title *The Dean Smith Years: Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class*.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

In the spring of 1975 the president of the Four Square Bible Class appointed a committee to inquire into the feasibility of preparing a full history of the class and a record of the work of its first teacher, Dean R. E. Smith. This committee was composed of Raymond Markham, president of the class, Glenn N. Walker, Jr., James Riley, Percy Browne, and Rev. Bentley Sloane. The teachers of the class at that time were Charles H. Rollins, immediate successor of Dean R. E. Smith, and the Rev. Bentley Sloane. The latter was commissioned to prepare the work since he had been a student of Dean Smith in Centenary College, had been a staff member of the First Methodist Church, and now in his retirement years has joined Charles H. Rollins as one of the teachers of the class in 1973.

In preparing this volume the author is indebted to many people. He needs first to mention Mrs. Gertrude Hile, who along with her late husband Bart Hile, has been editor and publisher of the Four Square Bulletin for many years. She is also the class archivist and has provided the author with the official scrapbook, most of the published bulletins, original copies of Dean Smith's writings, letters, and other historical material.

Percy Browne, a charter member of the class, a past president, at this writing an active participant in all affairs of the class, and a beloved and respected senior citizen of the First Methodist Church, has provided much help. His personal memory has provided much information, and his voluminous records and files were of great value. He has read and evaluated the manuscript. He and his wife Honora have opened their home to many committee meetings of the Four Square Bible class and it was in their home on that fateful day in 1923 that the naming of the class took place. Percy Browne prepared the first draft of the original Four Square constitution in that same year.

James S. Reily, an early member of the class and a close friend of Dean R. E. Smith, provided good material on the early days of the class and has been helpful in planning the book. He has been active in the affairs of the class and church and has helped in reading the manuscript. He helped plan the 50th Anniversary class celebration in 1973 and wrote a condensed history of the class for that occasion.

The author has used two other brief histories of the class, one by H. D. Poole, written in 1946 entitled "A Class is Born," and a more extensive history by Arch H. Bewley in 1969, including letters from former presidents and documents of tributes after Dean Smith's retirement and death.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn N. Walker, Jr. have provided valuable help with personal memories of the R. E. Smith family and scrapbooks relating to the Dean's activities. Mrs. Walker, who is the daughter of Mrs. R. E. Smith, has helped in typing and manuscript reading. She and her husband have given personal help and encouragement to this project.



Dr. B. C. Taylor and Dr. James T. Harris, two retired Methodist ministers who studied with Dean Smith in Ruskin Cave College and at Centenary College, have written beautiful memories of their experiences with their beloved friend and teacher. The author has conferred with them from time to time in preparing the manuscripts.

Dr. Garland Smith, Dean Smith's son and a distinguished educator now retired from Emory University, has provided much information pertaining to the Dean's early education and to his career before coming to Centenary College. His letters to the author included many interesting details of Dean Smith's life at Ruskin Cave College and of his move to Florida and later to Louisiana.

The author has corresponded with Mrs. Clara E. Bennett of Mayfield, Kentucky, the daughter of Dean Smith's older sister. As a young lady she was devoted to her Uncle Eddie. She too, attended Ruskin Cave College. She provided some interesting details about the Smith household based on her mother's memory.

Members of the Four Square Bible Class have given encouragement to this project and have provided some personal mementos from Dean Smith, such as letters, cards, bulletins, and pictures.

The author has spent many hours in the Cline Room Archives of Centenary College, searching records of the college, of the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, and the personal files of the Dean Smith years. Correspondence with Vanderbilt University, the University of Chicago, and Asbury College verified dates, courses, and names of prominent teachers who helped shape the theological and Biblical views of Dean R. E. Smith. These many sources help to make this book an authentic record.

Dr. Willis P. Butler, who joined the Four Square Bible Class in its beginning years and who was a close personal friend of the teacher, made a special tape recording of his memories of Dean Smith, giving some intimate details of class happenings and of his own profession of Christian faith.

Several persons have read the manuscript and made helpful corrections and suggestions. Mrs. W. C. Johns, an excellent English teacher, read the entire manuscript and made all necessary corrections in construction and punctuation.

In concluding our acknowledgments, we need to say a personal word about Charles H. Rollins, who in 1960 succeeded Dean Smith as teacher of the Four Square Bible Class. This many-talented man is an excellent Bible student and historian and brings to the class his lectures that are replete with solid facts, folk tales, wisdom, and sermonic exhortation delivered in fluent and entertaining style. For almost twenty years he has served the class as teacher and friend; he is beloved by all members of the class and by a wide circle of friends in the church and the Shreveport community. This "man from Virginia" is a graduate of Emory and Henry College (Methodist) and has been a school teacher, coach and a newspaper editor. He came to Shreveport in 1940 as Plant Protection Manager of the Louisiana Ordinance Plant and later became manager of the Shreveport Chapter of Associated General Contractors. He and his wife, Margaret, are deeply involved in the life of the First United Methodist Church.

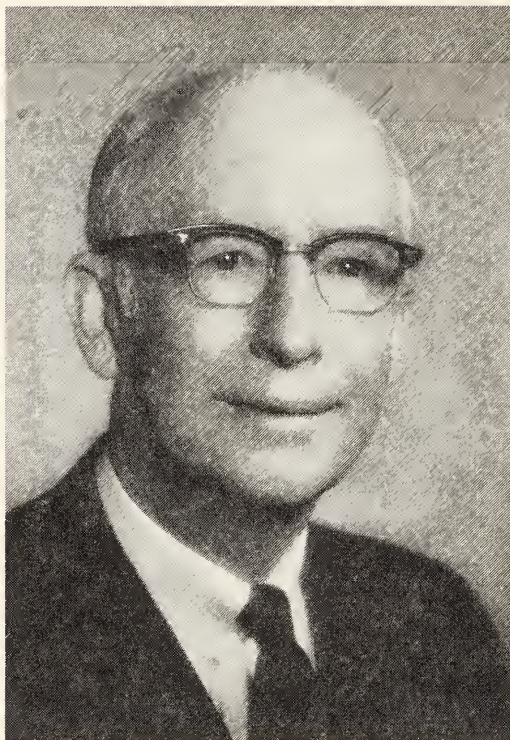
It is also fitting that this book should pay tribute to the Rev. Porter Caraway, a retired distinguished Methodist minister who served as assistant teacher to Chas. H. Rollins and was a member of the church staff as minister to senior citizens. In this relationship he endeared himself to all members of the Four Square Bible Class.

## **Officers of the Four Square Bible Class**

**1977-1978**

The year this work was completed the Four Square Bible Class was under the leadership of the following officers representative of those leaders out of the past who planned and conducted the affairs of the class each year in the tradition of excellence:

President, Gordon Hoyer  
First Vice President, R. A. Kindle  
Second Vice President, Wm. C. Newnan  
Third Vice President, Finley Doyle  
Treasurer, George Dill  
Secretary, Wayne Bateman  
Pianist, Mrs. Ruth Macheca  
Song Leaders, Melvin Regan, Frank Trant, Carroll Berry  
Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Helen Davis  
Brotherhood Chairman, Mrs. Olive Weaver  
Greeters, Mrs. Edith Morefield, Rea Fox  
Hostess, Mrs. Ailene Wilcox  
Social Committee, Mrs. Gordon Hoyer  
House Committee, Ray Collins  
Social Concerns, Mrs. Myrlene Miller  
Telephone Committee, Mrs. Billie Creed  
Bulletin, W. A. Broome  
Emeritis Secretary and Archivist, Mrs. Gertrude Hile  
Members, Board of Directors, Carroll Berry, Raymond Markham, George Gibson



**Dr. Bentley Sloane**  
**Author**  
**Co-Teacher of the Four Square Bible Class**



## Foreword

Having studied under Dean R. E. Smith for four years, and for the last forty years holding him in reverence as the greatest Bible teacher I have ever know, it would have seemed to me impossible for anyone to capture on the written page the true personality and influence of this great man; but Dr. Bentley Sloane has done it, and he has done it in a vivid way with unusual skill and with a special attention to detail.

I first came to know Dean Smith while in my childhood, in the early 30's, by way of the radio which carried his Four Square Bible Class lesson every Sunday morning. The broadcast was heard in my home town of Pleasant Hill, seventy miles from Shreveport, and I knew by the time I was twelve years old that I wanted to study at Centenary College under this great teacher. In 1934, at the age of sixteen, I entered Centenary and the dream came true. There is no way to exaggerate that influence on my life and thousands of others.

In 1945 I followed Dr. Bentley Sloane as Associate Pastor of The First Methodist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, and discovered for the first time the unique and varied skills of this outstanding minister. He has often said, and truthfully, that "they had to hire three men to take my place when I left First Methodist, and D. L. was one of them".

After serving with distinctive success as Pastor, Executive Secretary of The Board of Education of the Louisiana Annual Conference, and District Superintendent, Dr. Sloane took retired status in 1973. Immediately he became Staff Advisor to the new School of Church Careers at Centenary College and has served with his usual distinction in this capacity to the present. At the same time he followed in the illustrious train of Dr. R. E. Smith as Co-teacher with Mr. Charles Rollins of The Four Square Bible Class.

Now he brings us this excellent account of the life of Dr. Smith.

I congratulate Dr. Sloane on this noble accomplishment and I congratulate every reader on this privilege of meeting "The Dean".

Dr. D. L. Dykes, Jr.  
Pastor, First United Methodist Church  
Shreveport, Louisiana  
July 1978





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# CHAPTER I

## A Struggling College And A New Professor

"New things I now declare,  
before they spring forth I tell you of them."  
Isaiah

On certain occasions the juncture of time, place, and a man creates a fortuitous event destined to alter the course of history. Such an event occurred in May 1920, when the Rev. R. E. Smith arrived on the campus of Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana.

This, the oldest college west of the Mississippi River, was arousing itself from a period of lethargy after its removal to this city from Jackson, Louisiana, in 1908. The Board of Trustees under authority of the Louisiana Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was struggling to make Centenary an excellent liberal arts college through a campaign for funds and a careful selection of first rate faculty members. This new generation of leaders standing astride the time line between the first and second centuries of Centenary's illustrious history which began in 1825, are now marked for destiny. Prominent business and professional men of the community were summoned to this new task as trustees of the college, and the church provided its most gifted ministers. The Rev. W. R. Bourne was president of the college at this time, and Dr. John L. Scales was chairman of the Board of Trustees. The list of these distinguished laymen and clergy during this transition period in the early 1920's included E. A. Frost, A. J. Peavy, T. C. Clanton, J. M. Robinson, Dr. R. D. Webb, J. C. Foster, G. S. Prestridge, T. W. Holloman, F. T. Whited, J. W. Atkins, J. A. Thigpen, W. G. Banks, R. T. Moore, Dr. George Sexton, the Rev. W. W. Drake (Secretary of the Board), the Rev. J. M. Henry, the Rev. Wm. Schule, and the Rev. R. H. Wynn.

Through the efforts of President Bourne in the year 1920, the Rev. R. E. Smith was brought to the Shreveport campus from Florida Southern College as Professor of Biblical Literature. He and the Rev. Smith had been friends and classmates at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Smith's long and illustrious teaching career at Centenary College began in the fall semester of that year. The minutes of the college Board of Trustees' Faculty Committee for July 23, 1920, show that his beginning salary was set at \$1800 for nine months. Housing was provided on the campus for him and Mrs. Smith and their three children.

In the meantime the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had authorized the General Board of Education to raise twenty-five or thirty million dollars for the colleges and universities under its control. To share in these funds, the Centenary Board of Trustees meeting February 12, 1920, resolved to make Centenary College an A-Grade college under control of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The nationwide campaign was to begin in May 1920, and Centenary would ask for \$800,000 from the anticipated funds. (The total amount did not materialize).



## **Both President and Dean**

In November 1920, the General Board of Education requested the service of President Bourne to aid in this fund raising campaign, and the Board of Trustees granted him leave for this purpose. At the same time the Trustees elected the Rev. R. E. Smith as acting president in addition to his teaching duties and added \$100.00 per month to his salary. He continued in this dual capacity until May 1921, at which time he made his report as president to the Board of Trustees covering the period from November 1920 to May 31, 1921, after which date Dr. Geo. Sexton assumed the office of president.

Prior to this report the Rev. R. E. Smith had been elected dean of the college and professor of Biblical Literature by the trustees, and his annual salary increased to \$3600. As his work load in teaching increased and his numerous out of town speaking engagements grew, he felt it necessary to give up his position as dean of the college. At the Board of Trustees meeting June 4, 1924, he resigned and was named Dean Emeritus. From that time on this great man was known to thousands of students, friends, and acquaintances as Dean Smith. It was a title of dignity, affection, and excellence so befitting one whose whole life was dedicated to the teaching ministry. By this date his roots were deep in the native soil of Centenary College, where he had served as professor, president and dean.

## **A Low Point and Answered Prayer**

Let us turn from the events transpiring on the campus of Centenary College in the crucial year of 1920-1921 to another scene of the drama unfolding in the life of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana.

Single events occurring without the context of later history often seem insignificant at the time. But some strange integrating force connects these events and forms them into a flowing stream of history, out of which there arise new meaning and significance. Such an event occurred one Sunday morning in August 1920 in the class room of the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana. The one attendant on that Sunday was Mr. Frank R. Hicks, and the class was without a teacher. Disconsolate and discouraged over the imminent demise of the class, he decided to remain alone in the room and spend the hour in prayer and meditation, asking God to send a teacher and revive the class. The answer to this prayer was consummated soon thereafter when the Rev. R. E. Smith, Professor of Biblical Literature at Centenary College, accepted the invitation to become the teacher. The great Interdenominational Four Square Bible Class of the city of Shreveport grew from this mustard seed of faith and prayer. And so converging events relative to Centenary College, Dr. R. E. Smith and the Business Men's Bible Class of First Methodist Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana, are illuminated with new meaning.

# CHAPTER II

## THE MAN FROM KENTUCKY

**“There was a man in the land perfect and upright.”**

Book of Job

In this unfolding drama that is now before us there is a main character who holds together the various acts and scenes in the story being told: The Rev. Robert Edward Smith, an ordained Methodist preacher, a college teacher, a popular lecturer, a writer, a radio personality, a family man, an activist citizen, and the “elan vital” of the great Four Square Bible Class. Who is this man?

The bare chronicle of his life can be presented briefly:

He was born September 30, 1874, in Benton, Kentucky, child of a country doctor, Dillard Green Smith, and Julia A. Van Hook. He had two brothers and one sister. He died in Shreveport, Louisiana, September 10, 1965, at the age of 90.

He received his boyhood education in the rural schools of Marshall County, Kentucky, near Benton.

He received his high school education at Marvin College in Hickman County at Clinton, Kentucky.

In 1892 he taught in Trevathan elementary school.

He graduated from Edgewood College, Edgewood, Tenn. with BA and MA degrees prior to 1899.

He met and married Miss Hester Thompson at Edgewood College, where he taught briefly.

In 1899-1901 he taught Latin and Mathematics at Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky. Garland Garvey Smith was born here August 29, 1901.

In 1902-1903 he taught in Meridian Male College, Meridian, Mississippi.

In 1904 he was ordained Deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Tennessee Annual Conference and became subject to appointment by a Methodist bishop.

In 1905 he founded Ruskin Cave College at Ruskin, Tenn.

Julia Christine Smith was born December 5, 1905.

Hazel Irene Smith was born October 27, 1908.

In 1908 he was ordained Elder in the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

In 1909 he graduated from Vanderbilt University with B. D. degree.

In 1909-1914 he attended the University of Chicago and the University of Tennessee.

In 1917 he transferred from Ruskin Cave College to the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

In 1917-1920 he taught in Florida Southern College and served a Methodist

Church at Parrish, Florida.

In 1920 he came to Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana.

In 1920 (October) he became teacher of the Business Men's Bible Class, which was renamed the Four Square Bible class.

In 1946 he retired from active ministry in the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at age 72.

In 1949 he retired from Centenary College Faculty at age 75.

In 1960 he retired as teacher of the Four Square Bible Class.

### **A Youth, A Lamp and A Book**

When the man from Kentucky first arrived in the Shreveport community and took over his teaching duties at Centenary College and the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, little was known of his early life and past experiences. Only after many years do we have the record, and even this is only in broad outline. But what we do have is a fascinating story of a man who makes a "Pilgrim's Progress" in his own life time.

In early childhood Eddie Smith (as he was known to his family) looked out on a wondrous world filled with natural beauty and echoing the footsteps of those pioneers who had so recently passed through Kentucky to establish frontiers ever westward. The wooded hills and fruitful fields beckoned the growing mind of this country boy and bade him seek those things that are eternal. Perhaps "the winds told him all they knew" and stirred his restless spirit. Eagerly he turned to the stored wisdom of the written word, and a letter sent by one of his cousins in 1978 stated that "as a boy you always found him with a book. No one ever wanted to learn more than he did." One of his books was the King James Version of the Holy Bible. In a conversation with J. S. Reily years later he stated that education for him started in a little back room in his Kentucky home by the light of a kerosene lamp.

### **The Country School Teacher**

According to information received from his son, Dr. Garland Smith and from his cousin Mrs. Clara Evans Bennett, shortly after the Civil War Dean Smith's father, Dr. Dillard Smith, married and moved to Benton, Kentucky, in Marshall County. The Methodist Church there is built on the lot donated at that time by Dr. Smith. Robert Edward Smith was born while his parents resided here.

Dr. Dillard Smith was a graduate of what later became Vanderbilt University Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee. The famous son was to follow his father in the halls of this great university, but in another academic discipline. Dr. Smith was a Confederate Veteran, a stern disciplinarian, and a dedicated Methodist. So was his wife Julia Van Hook.



Eddie Smith received his early education in several rural schools near Benton, Kentucky, and when his father later moved to Spring Hill in Hickman County near the county seat of Clinton, he and his sister attended Marvin College in that town, driving five miles back and forth each day. Whether he graduated from Marvin College or simply completed his high school education we do not know, but soon thereafter in 1892 at the age of eighteen we find him teaching in the famous Trevathan School of Hickman County.

The Trevathan elementary school was founded in 1852 and was the last rural school to be consolidated in that county one hundred years later. A picture of the rebuilt one room Trevathan school with an accompanying story was published in the Hickman County Gazette in 1951. Listed as the eleventh teacher of the school in 1892 was Robert Eddie Smith, an eighteen year old boy whose name appears along with several clergymen and other prominent citizens making up that long list of country school teachers spanning an entire century. He held this teaching post for one year.

### **The Emerging Christian Scholar**

We have only sparse records of the next period in his life, but we do know that following his brief tenure with the Trevathan school he began his long quest for a professional education in answer to a sure and persistent call from God to a vocation in the Church.

What were his early church experiences? When did he first hear an inner voice bidding him walk the holy road? Who gave him counsel? When was he moved to cast his lot with the people called Methodists and at what age did he make church membership vows? What great preachers did he hear? Did he attend any of the great Kentucky Camp Meetings? When did he take the first step toward the ordained ministry and what were his first experiences in the Methodist Annual Conferences? These are questions we must leave unanswered for the moment since we must proceed now with our unfolding story.

One sure landmark we have is his experience at Edgewood College in Edgewood, Tennessee, prior to 1899. He must have enrolled there shortly after his brief teaching stint at the Trevathan School in 1892. (Edgewood College no longer exists). According to Vanderbilt University records we do know that he earned a B.A. and also a M.A. from this college. He must have been an outstanding student because he became a member of the faculty shortly after graduation. It was at this time he met and married Miss Hester Thompson, who was also part of the College student body there and may have joined him later as a faculty member.

### **Brief Stint at Asbury College**

By this time his teaching credentials and reputation were well known, and in 1899 he became a member of the faculty at the famous Asbury College of Wilmore, Kentucky, founded by the great Holiness Methodist preacher Dr. Henry

Clay Morrison in the Wesleyan tradition to "spread Scriptural holiness over the land". It was here that his son, Garland was born.

We do not know much about his Asbury experience, but we do know that Asbury College at that time was extremely conservative in theology and Biblical interpretation and came out of the "Holiness" movement in the Methodist Church, stressing emotional conversion, the "second blessing", and gifts of the Holy Spirit resulting in holiness and Christian perfection. J. W. Hughes was president at this time, and according to Dr. Garland Smith expressed his "righteous indignation" against faculty members who crossed him in the form of what we commonly know as an "ungovernable, bad temper". Exactly what the Rev. R. E. Smith's views of Biblical studies were at that time we do not know, but if they were similar to those he held when he came to Centenary College, he could not have endured the Asbury climate very long.

### **Meridian Male College**

In any event his restless and questing spirit led him to Meridian Male College in Meridian, Mississippi in 1902. This also was a small liberal arts college in the tradition of Pentecostal Christianity. When some administrative problems arose, Dean Smith left this college and took with him about twenty-five students who accompanied him to Ruskin, Tennessee. We have an interesting letter in the Four Square Bible Class archives from R. C. Forman, who studied under Dean Smith both in Meridian Male College and in Ruskin Cave College. He speaks of Meridian Male College:

"More than a quarter of a century ago, in 1902, I sat as a boy and listened to Professor Smith at Meridian Male College. He gathered me in the flood of his eloquence and swept me along with the tide of his feelings, directed my youthful thinking and inspired me to an ambitious effort toward the righteous life and constructive good. He turned the very nature of my thinking and reversed the course of my ambitions". Here, even in his twenties, we have evidence of Dean Smith's growing power as a prophetic preacher and his skill as a creative teacher.



## CHAPTER III

### SEARCH FOR VOCATION

#### A VOICE CALLING

There comes a time in the life of a growing youth, boy or girl, when he must decide on the course of his life in vocation. Where in the great world of human endeavor should his life be invested? How can his aptitudes and talents be measured against the work that must be done in the world? How can he bring together the vocation he has chosen and the economic demands of the secular world in which he and his family must live? How are the priorities to be ordered when choices involving the work one loves and the necessity of economic success must be made?

Robert Edward Smith made his decision in the above matters in answer to a divine call. He was marked for destiny, and as a sensitive young man he was ever alert and attentive to the guidance of God. Perhaps he heard no strident voice and saw no flash of light on the Damascus road, but something deep within said, "Come, follow me". And like those fisherman of old without knowing the end of the road, he arose and followed. The Prophet Jeremiah says it best in the language of the RSV Common Bible:

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying.  
Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.  
Then I said, "Ah Lord God! Behold, I do not know  
how to speak, for I am only a youth".

But the Lord said to me,  
Do not say, 'I am only a youth';  
for to all to whom I send you you shall go,  
and whatever I command you you shall speak.  
Be not afraid of them,  
for I am with you to deliver you,  
says the Lord.

When the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,  
Behold, I have put my words in your mouth".

Jeremiah 1:4-9.

## **The Broadening View**

From 1892, when Dean Smith first began his teaching career in rural Kentucky, to 1910, while he was at Ruskin Cave College, his Biblical and theological education must have progressed steadily. Many different streams of Biblical theology must have entered his thinking to be examined, tested, sorted out, and molded into a view of his own.

Kentucky had been at the center of many great religious revivals dominated by the harsh Calvinistic preaching of Baptist and Presbyterian evangelists and the "free grace" gospel of the Methodist circuit riders. A spin-off from the main line Methodist movement was a "holiness" movement mentioned earlier which produced Asbury College at Wilmore, Kentucky. The great Camp Meeting revivals were the religious order of the day, and this influenced greatly the outlook of the various churches. No doubt the churches Dean Smith attended as a boy were conservative in theological outlook and presented to him a literalistic view of the Bible. We have very little information about his exposure to the church, his religious experiences, his part in the church program during his boyhood. His parents being dedicated Christians and members of the Methodist Church no doubt saw to it that he attended the services of the church, that he was baptized and subsequently that he became a full member. Information provided by Garland Smith tells us that Dean Smith's father and mother taught in the Sunday School of the Spring Hill Methodist Church in Hickman County, Kentucky. It was his mother church that nourished his call to vocation and ordained him for its ministry. It was the Methodist church that appointed him to his places of service as a preacher and teacher. In 1934 while at Centenary College he wrote a beautiful little book entitled "Rethinking Methodism," the story of the Wesleyan movement in England and America. In the introduction we find these pertinent sentences:

"Methodism is not merely a church, a creed. It is a system of truth, ageless and universal. Without bigotry let us think of Methodism as the Mt. Everest of modern religious movements. Every church in Christendom is a beneficiary of the Wesleyan movement. From it both Establishment and Dissent, Catholic and Protestant received new life".

## **An Enlightened Faith**

The energetic mind of this young teacher and preacher could not be locked into the narrow confines of a static theology. Truth must not be subverted to dogma. In his study of the Wesleyan movement he must have taken seriously the injunction of Methodism's founder when he said, "Let us unite the two so long divided, knowledge and vital piety."

In seeking the best theological education available he turned first to the Theological School of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, a seminar established by the Methodist church and rooted in the tradition of liberal and enlightened Biblical scholarship. Their records show that Robert Edward Smith

graduated in 1909 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, having previously earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from Edgewood College. The great Biblical Scholars under whom he studied at Vanderbilt University are well known as theologians and writers and no doubt deeply influenced his life and religious outlook: Dr. W. G. Fillett, Dean and Prof. of Systematic Theology; Dr. J. A. Kern, Practical Theology; Dr. Thomas Carter, New Testament Greek; and Dr. Henry Beach Carre,\* Biblical Theology. While in residency here, he returned each week end to his work at Ruskin Cave College.

Dean Smith was also a student at the University of Tennessee and the University of Chicago during summer vacations from Ruskin Cave. The University of Chicago has contributed many innovations to the field of higher education and has produced technical scholars in science, medicine, education, archeology, theology, and Biblical research. In the records of the Divinity School during the period from 1902 to 1910, the period Dean Smith must have attended, we find the names of some of the greatest scholars of the twentieth century in the field of theology and Biblical history: Dr. Edgar Goodspeed, the first translator of the Old and New Testaments from the original languages to American English and author of many books on the New Testament; Dr. Ernest De Wit Burton, Head of the Department of New Testament Literature; Dr. Shailer Matthews, Professor of Systematic Theology; Dr. Theodore G. Soares, Professor of Religious Education and Homiletics; Dr. Shirley Jackson Case, Professor of New Testament Interpretation; and Dr. Gerlad Birney Smith, Professor of Systematic Theology. The many books produced by these technical scholars are still used widely in all the great libraries of colleges and seminaries. Dr. Garland Smith notes that his father often referred to Professor Shailer Matthews as one who greatly influenced his thinking. As further evidence of this scholarly growth in his thinking during this period he selected two noteworthy text books for his Bible Courses at Centenary College: **A History of the Hebrew Commonwealth** by Albert E. Bailey and Charles Foster Kent, the latter of Yale University, first published in 1920 and later revised in 1935; and **The Life and Teachings of Jesus** by Charles Foster Kent, first published in 1913.

So it was that this boy from rural Kentucky at the turn of the century, prompted by a great thirst for knowledge and a divine call to serve, studying by the light of a kerosene lamp in a small back room of his home, found his way into the great universities of the land and sat at the feet of famous Biblical scholars who shaped his thinking, enlarged his vision, and sent him forth equipped in every way for a brilliant teaching career of his own that would carry him beyond the middle of the twentieth century.

\*Dr. Carre had been president of Centenary College in 1903 but left after one year to become a faculty member of Vanderbilt University.



# **CHAPTER IV**

## **EDUCATIONAL VENTURE AT RUSKIN CAVE**

### **A Restless Educator**

We come now to a critical and highly significant period in Dean Smith's life in his relationship to Ruskin Cave College at Ruskin, Tennessee. While teaching at Meridan Male College, he learned of the availability of a tract of land and a group of college buildings located in this small village. Local citizens recalled that a group of socialists established a colony here and named the college and the nearby mountain cave "Ruskin" in honor of John Ruskin an English author and a reputed Socialist. They also were representative of a Pentecostal type church. After this project failed, the property was placed on the market, and Dean Smith arranged for its purchase. From Meridian Male College he brought a few of his students and colleagues and made ambitious plans for the establishment of a school and college encompassing all grades from the first through college graduation. He called it "Ruskin Cave College", and it was to be a non-denominational but strictly Christian institution.

He began this venture in 1905, when he was thirty-one years of age. At last he had found a place where his manifold talents could be fully expressed and utilized. He was the headmaster, one of the college teachers, the chapel preacher, the final authority in student and faculty discipline, and spiritual counselor for the entire community. With characteristic vigor and dedication he set about creating his own educational institution.

### **A Unique College**

Even at this early date Dean Smith was a firm believer in the rights of women and included both sexes in the student body and faculty. Mrs. Smith was a teacher of music and mathematics. He selected carefully his faculty and staff from those who promised faithfully to adhere to all rules and regulations he and his colleagues had established. R. J. Kelley was vice president and eventually joined Dean Smith at Centenary College.

President Smith set an example of strict discipline in his own life and required it of others with whom he worked. At 7:30 each morning he taught a class in theology. This was followed by a chapel service and his devotional message to the student body. Classes dismissed at 3:30 P.M., at which time all students both boy and girls were required to participate in a military type drill which lasted another hour.

### **"At The Forks of the Road"**

A beautiful brochure proclaiming the virtues of Ruskin Cave College was

written by President Smith and mailed to all parents of prospective students. It is entitled "At the Forks of the Road near the Village School." Some of the priceless and revealing paragraphs are herein quoted:

"There are none of these bad influences at Ruskin Cave College. We have no baseball nor football matches; no hazing, fraternities, loafing or profanity, no tobacco allowed in the school or even sold in the place! Every teacher is a consecrated Christian, clean in life and habits, and takes personal interest in every boy or girl."

Instead of competitive games and sports, military type exercise drills were held each afternoon for both boys and girls (on separate fields, of course!). This military type training noted in the brochure "does all that is justly claimed for the brutal games, and breaks no bones, costs you nothing extra, and loses no time from study."

For the girls "our musical facilities are the very best. Piano, organ, voice, chorus, violin and brass band, all under skilled musicians and at much cheaper rates than elsewhere. The most delicate girl can come to Ruskin Cave. Our mineral water, physical training, wholesome food, pure country air and personal attention keep them well and happy."

Pictures of uniforms worn by the students reveal for the boys a neat high collar jacket with army cap and for the girls long dark dresses that had a high collar and bow tie; an academic cap crowned the head. These did not appear to be very suitable for rigorous marching.

In one paragraph of the brochure Dean Smith reveals his basic philosophy of teaching: "A real teacher of boys and girls may press into his classes just as many as he has in his heart - no more. Upon the breastplate of the Jewish high priest there were set twelve precious stones in casings of pure gold. The name of one of the tribes of Israel was burnt into every stone. Wearing this royal plate and bearing life blood in his hands the priest, in behalf of his people, entered once a year into the holy of holies and stood for a few awful moments before the cherubim in the blazing shekinah light of the glory of God. That is the attitude of the true teacher. His class room is a holy place and he really teaches only so many as he wears engraven on his heart, and whose blood he feels on his hands, and whose names he mentions alone in secret to God."

### **"A Man Holding A Light"**

A letter from the Rev. D. B. Raulins gives us an interesting and graphic account of Ruskin Cave College. He was an ardent disciple of Dean Smith and joined him at Centenary College in 1920; later he became a distinguished leader in the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Church.

He writes, "One September night in 1907 the old hack bearing students, drawn by mustang ponies, came to a grating stop in front of the main building of Ruskin Cave College, Ruskin, Tennessee. The older students were greeted with joy by students and faculty awaiting their arrival. I crawled down from the hack.



The cheery greeting for the older students but augmented my isolation and added to my loneliness. I advanced a step. There stood in my way a man, not with drawn sword, but with a lamp in his hand. (And this is a parable: - From that moment he has been holding a light for me, and will hold it until tomorrow). A hand slipped toward me in the night, and a voice said, 'This is Raulins, is it'? The holder of that lamp was R. E. Smith and the voice that spoke was that of the greatest teacher I have ever known. He was then president of Ruskin Cave College. For five years I was associated with R. E. Smith as a student. During those years he taught me something of Latin, Greek, Sociology, Browning, Homiletics, Theology and the Bible."

We have a descriptive note about Ruskin Cave College written by President Smith himself in 1910. It is a letter published in the New Orleans Christian Advocate, September 22, of that year, and the enthusiasm it expresses gives us insight into the reasons for his success as a teacher and administrator: "Ruskin college has easily the best opening ever known in her history - more students, more teachers, better accommodations, greater enthusiasm and spiritual power.

A week before September 7 the eager students came. Train after train landed them, and a jolly crowd it was. Here they came from Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Cuba, Wyoming, the Philippines and every direction. I believe we could get 500, but we can take only 200.

We ask all of God's people to continue to pray for us and our little village. It's a lovely spot and we want it to be kept for the Master's use."

R. E. Smith, Ruskin, Tennessee.

### **"Headmaster Smith"**

Dr. James T. Harris, one of Dean Smith's students at Ruskin Cave College and a subsequent graduate of Centenary College and a companion of the Dean on his trip to the Holy Land in 1926, has written an interesting account of these early years at Ruskin Cave College: "My father bought the one store in Ruskin, Tennessee, and moved there in 1914 when I was only nine years old. Ruskin Cave College was a privately owned, non-sectarian Christian school that provided instruction all the way from the first grade through four years of college. It was located in this little middle Tennessee village. The rules of the college, which were also the governing ideals of the whole community, were extremely strict even for those days before the first world war. All of us stood in awe of president and headmaster Smith. His word was law and final. Even in my childhood Dr. Smith made a lasting impression on my life. President Smith lived in the largest house in the community with his wife, (Hester Thompson), and their three children, Garland, Christine and Hazel. I was in and out of their home quite a lot. Ruskin Cave College closed its doors in 1918 due to World War One. During the next two years Dr. Smith was connected with Florida southern College. when in the summer of 1921 my parents were trying to decide where to send me to college, the decision was made when we heard that Dr. Smith was teaching in Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana. Two other members of the Ruskin Cave College

family were also on the faculty at Centenary College. They were Rev. D. B. Raulins and R. J. Kelly. So in September of 1921 I enrolled in Centenary and once more came under the direct influence of Dr. R. E. Smith."

In 1959 a reunion of graduates and former students of Ruskin Cave College was held at the old college site, featuring a luncheon in the entrance to the famous Ruskin Cave. Over one hundred were present, which gives some indication of the wide influence of this unique institution. There were indeed some distinguished alumni in the group. One retired Methodist minister observed: "This was a hard school. We had to have five years of Latin, four years of Greek and four years of Math. Discipline was strong and two couples were expelled when they were discovered "courtin' " behind the main building. The headmaster, Rev. R. E. Smith, was a stern disciplinarian and he ruled the school with a strong hand. He bore his responsibility for the moral, educational and spiritual welfare of his students and likewise his faculty. The school was non-sectarian but rooted deeply in the Christian faith and tradition." As the old graduates moved about the campus among the shattered and decaying buildings on that day in 1959, strange voices out of the past spoke of the one who made it all possible. But the headmaster now eighty-five years of age could not join the reunion and sent his regrets from Shreveport, Louisiana in these words: "Father Time says 'No'."

### **The Itinerant Methodist Preacher**

Robert Edward Smith now envisioned his life work in custody of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and joined the ranks of those noble circuit riders who preceded him on the frontiers of Kentucky. Ministry would involve his special talents for teaching and preaching, and in later years these two would be blended in his long years of service to the Four Square Bible Class. In full Wesleyan tradition he was ordained to the Ministerial orders of deacon and elder in the four year period from 1904 to 1908 and was received in "full connection" into the Annual Conference encompassing east Tennessee and Kentucky. According to Dr. B. C. Taylor his ordination was under Bishop Wilson and Bishop Key. From that time on, wherever he found a place of service, he was subject to the appointment of his presiding Bishop.

The twelve years at Ruskin Cave College were years of hard work, thrilling successes, and maturing experiences. He was only thirty-one years of age when he embarked on this venture and when he left after twelve significant years, he was forty-three. Two daughters were born in this period, Julia Christine and Hazel Irene. He was deeply involved in administrative tasks of the college, in teaching and preaching, and in pursuing his theological education. Then came the disaster of World War I, and in 1917 the College was forced to close. President Smith was then transferred to a preaching appointment at Parrish, Florida, which consisted of a two point circuit. Ruskin Cave College had been placed in the hands of vice president R. J. Kelly, but his leadership was not adequate to surmount the crisis of war, and this noble experiment in education closed its doors in 1917 and



ceased to exist. We do not have the full record of the process of closing down the college and the losses financial and otherwise that devolved upon President Smith. His son Garland Smith has stated that of the many students who had been assisted financially by the president only a few ever paid their debts. These were matters seldom discussed by Dean Smith in subsequent years.

In the latter part of 1917 he accepted an appointment as Professor of Religion and College preacher at Florida Southern College, a Methodist institution at Southland, Florida. He also served as part time pastor of a small Methodist Church in Duneden, a nearby community. Dr. B. C. Taylor, who had graduated in the high school department of Ruskin Cave College and had accompanied Dean Smith to Florida Southern College, tells us that a busload of students accompanied the Dean to this little church for the Sunday night preaching service.

After three years serving as teacher and pastor in the Florida appointment, the Macedonian call came from Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana, through president Bourne, and he arrived on the campus in May 1920. Since the financial situation at Centenary College at that time was bleak, he was to be appointed as part time pastor of the Texas Avenue Methodist Church in Shreveport, which work would supplement his low college salary. But when the annual conference convened in November 1920, the Bishop and the cabinet saw fit to appoint another minister to the Texas Avenue Methodist Church, and the Rev. R. E. Smith was appointed only to his position at Centenary College. If the original plan to appoint him to a part time pastorate had been followed, he would not have been available to teach the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana. Again we see the fateful intertwining of events that produced unexpected results and thus opened the door for him to enter a new career as teacher of the yet-to-be Four Square Bible Class.



# CHAPTER V

## THE SHREVEPORT SETTING

### **“Watching O’er The Throbbing City Alma Mater Shines”**

To understand fully the role of Centenary College, the progress of The Four Square Bible Class, and the work of Dean R. E. Smith in the Decade of the “Roaring Twenties,” we must now examine the Shreveport community. What were the social, economic, religious, and political forces reflected in the Shreveport community that provided a background for student-faculty life at Centenary College during these years of change?

In 1920 Shreveport was enjoying a double blessing from mother nature. The Red River valley provided rich fields and plantations for cotton, corn, and cattle; the forests provided resources for a great lumber industry; but most important of all, the great oil fields of North Louisiana, East Texas, and South Arkansas brought undreamed of wealth and industry to Shreveport. To the great family names of plantation owners, banking heads, and merchant princes were added the names of the new rich in the oil and gas industry. In 1920 the population of Shreveport was 44,000, but soon the city limits were extended to include Agurs, Cedar Grove, and South Highlands; the population grew to 75,000 by 1930.

Soon the major oil companies moved in to control production and distribution of oil and gas throughout the area and to stimulate the discovery of new fields. Standard Oil Company, Gulf Refining Company, and the Texas Company were the giants.

At the same time a young “Don Quixote” by the name of Huey Long opened a law office in Shreveport and got himself elected a member of the Railroad Commission from North Louisiana. The rest of the story is deep in the history books. He was a frequent attendant at the Four Square Bible Class, and it is reported that he always dropped a ten or twenty dollar bill in the collection plate with a sweeping gesture to attract attention!

Centenary College was the benefactor of this economic growth, and in due time many of the first families made large contributions to its endowment and provided sons and daughters for her student body. John B. Atkins made the initial gift of land that brought Centenary to Shreveport in 1908, and this famous family has continued to provide both material gifts and sons and daughters to the student body.

The oil boom and prohibition arrived in Louisiana at the same time during this exciting decade. The oil fields drew the lawless elements of humanity including gamblers, prostitutes, drifters, as well as the hard working and hard drinking roustabouts. Law enforcement agents of the city and parish were largely occupied with fighting the sale of bootleg whiskey, illicit distilleries, and various crimes

related to this underground operation. Shreveport shared in the political emotions of this prohibition era and the fight to repeal the 18th amendment. The churches and temperance forces fought a strong rear guard action against the bitter rising tide of repeal, and Dean R. E. Smith of Centenary College became the recognized spokesman for the Prohibition forces.

### **The Radio Era**

Radio came to Shreveport in the form of a private station WAAB operated in the home of W. E. Anthony. This was followed in 1922 by a ten watt station WDAN established by John D. Ewing, W. G. Patterson, Jack Tullos and W. K. Henderson, Jr. This station later was relicensed with the call letters WGAW. W. K. Henderson, Jr. bought the station in 1925 and changed the call letters to KWKH. The original station was bought by W. G. Patterson and changed to KSBA, but Henderson obtained a new license and built a new transmitter and power plant for KWKH. Listeners began to hear a familiar voice calling, "Hello World," and thus was inaugurated the first direct selling of products by radio and the use of propaganda for special causes. In 1927 KRMD was established, and the same year saw the First Baptist Church and the Central Christian Church operating their own broadcasting stations.

In 1925 Centenary College offered a course in radio by professor W. B. King of the Science Department, and a small station on the campus CCL broadcast music by the college band and the Glee Club. Thus, one hundred years after its founding Centenary College was pioneering in the new technology of the 20th century.

### **Campus Life**

The decade of the "Roaring Twenties" touched lightly the faculty and student body of Centenary College. The big fur coat and the waving pennants, short hair and short skirts, the Charleston, the Model T and other soft-top autos with hard tires - all these secular symbols could be found about the campus. The Hollywood kings and queens were appearing on the silver screens. The Strand Theatre was built during this period and was a popular entertainment center for the students. The De Mille production, "The Ten Commandments", attracted large crowds to see Moses command the waters of the "Red Sea" to stack up on either side so the Israelites could walk through. There were Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, and sweet little Mary Pickford to titillate the romantic stirrings of the students. The X rated movies in living color were to arrive later. Radio was a novelty, and television was a dream. Dances were not permitted on the campus (regarded as activities conducive to sin!), but the sororities and fraternities sponsored them at other locations. This restriction was later lifted by the Methodist Conference since most Methodists (and some Baptists!) were already dancing! The dormitory students were not distracted by the strident sounds of "Rock and



Roll". Weekend football games, the State Fair, picnics and outings at Pleasureville (where a student was murdered in a triangular situation), Church and Y.M.C.A. activities, Glee Club and band concerts, basketball, baseball and tennis, inter-collegiate debate, and of course fraternities and sororities provided ample social and recreational outlets for the students.

Chapel attendance was compulsory. From time to time evangelists were brought in, but one of the most popular speakers was Dean R. E. Smith whose bright wit, scholarly depth in all fields of thought, and dramatic style held the student body spell bound.

### **"But Our Hearts Will Love Thee Ever"**

Because of the large proportion of dormitory students and the limited amount of weekend travel, the college was a close, warm community of students and faculty. On special occasions the singing of the Alma Mater aroused a deep devotion and loyalty in the hearts of the students. The men's quartet might sing on the steps of the dormitory during the evening hours while students gathered about under the stars. Perhaps a lone bugler could be heard just before lights out, sending across the wooded campus the soft notes of Taps as he sought to improve his status in the band. These experiences helped to create in each student a deep sense of belonging to a special group, and "the halls of ivy" became a hallowed symbol in his life.

There were some ideals growing among the students. In 1925 when the college celebrated its first century of history Miss Delia Munday wrote a poem entitled "A Hundred Years of Centenary". We quote one stanza of this poem which measures something of the brave idealism of this generation of students later to be modified by the withering skepticism of H. L. Menkin, Sinclair Lewis, and by the advent of the secular society. She speaks for Centenary:

"I stand for God for life, and truth,  
I face the daybreak, not the dark;  
Beneath my banners dauntless youth  
Still marches forward toward the mark.  
A hundred years stretch out before -  
Years full of deeds for those who dare.  
I stand beside the open door  
And lift my banner in the air."

In 1927 when Lindbergh made his historic solo flight across the Atlantic, President Sexton called the student body together to announce the news and to praise "this noble lad" for opening up a new world.

Students at Centenary during the Roaring Twenties were like all generations of students in their need for funds. College expenses were low as compared to current standards, and the catalog of 1922-23 lists tuition and fees per semester at \$50.00 and room and board at \$75.00. Some scholarships were available; many students were employed as ground crews, dining hall waiters, janitors, and

laundry agents. Student hair cuts were 25 cents. Selber Bros. advertised Hart Shaffner and Marx as well as Hickey Freeman suits from \$28.50 to \$58.50. Stag Clothing Company offered collegiate sweaters at \$7.50 and Florsheim shoes at \$10.00. For the girls the Collegiate Permanent Wave was a popular item at \$15.00. Funds became tight especially during the early depression years 1929-33, when President Sexton announced that certain amounts of eggs and vegetables could be applied on room and board or better still, bales of cotton.

### **The Religious Situation**

This was the era of theological conflict in all the major church bodies dominated by a conservative "Fundamentalism" as opposed to the heresy of Modernism. William Jennings Bryan, the great spokesman for conservative religion, came to Shreveport in 1924 and lectured to thousands on the "godless heresy of evolution". Feeling ran high not only in Shreveport but throughout the nation, and the climax occurred when Bryan and Clarence Darrow confronted each other in the great debate and trial at Dayton, Tennessee. All of this was a mixture of politics, sociology, and Bible Belt religion which swept the country for many years beyond the twenties. The rise of the new psychology called Behaviorism, purporting to take away man's free soul by substituting a biological machine as a responding agency, created another battle line for the church. In the midst of all this there arose another group claiming a new interpretation of Old Testament prophecy related to contemporary discoveries in Egypt at the great pyramids. One man from Mansfield, Louisiana, on the basis of this had worked out a gigantic chart showing in detail the dates leading up to the imminent demise of the planet and Christ's second coming. He lectured to thousands in Shreveport and in other parts of the nation. He had to leave before his prophecy was fulfilled.

Centenary students were caught up in the emotional tides of this era, and the great Dean Smith held high the torch of sanity and authentic biblical scholarship in the midst of it all. He listened and smiled, and without any direct assault on these theological vagaries, he tactfully maneuvered his students to the high ground of truth through a spiritual interpretation of the words of the Bible. When he did attack obvious error or dangerous bigotry, he did it with gentle irony and with the authority of great knowledge. He was not without his theological enemies among the more conservative ministers who thought his handling of the Bible was far too liberal. Most students in his college classes brought a very conservative religious background, but he awakened them step by step to a deeper understanding of the Bible without attempting to refute or destroy their faith. "He has come to fulfill and not to destroy."

### **A Social Conscience**

There was some slight stirring of the social conscience on the college campus in these years of the twenties. One chapel lecturer suggested that war was a sin and if a soldier killed another in battle, God held him responsible for it, not mere

his nation. Christ could have been a black man if God had so chosen, said another speaker. In some of the classes a book produced by a Y.M.C.A. secretary declaring on the basis of controlled experiments that blacks were not inferior to whites in basic learning abilities was widely discussed. However, the only blacks allowed on the campus were those related to the labor crews. Blacks could not vote (there were devious ways of preventing them from registering), and women had been enfranchised only as late as 1920. Jews and Catholics were part of the student body, and much to the chagrin of the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, their grades were superior. One of the outstanding faculty members was a Jew.

The chief religious organizations on the campus were the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. These groups represented a strong national evangelistic outreach of their organizations, and student representatives from Centenary were sent to the summer conventions held at the headquarters in North Carolina. The Ministerial Club of pre-seminary students sponsored by Dean Smith was of great influence on the campus. Local churches of all denominations in Shreveport were active on the campus, inviting students to participate in church programs and special evangelistic meetings. During this period the Rev. Billy Sunday held a great inter-denominational revival in a wooden tabernacle constructed a few blocks from the First Methodist Church. Satan and sin got a good going over in the Shreveport area, but some of the deeper social sins remained untouched.



# CHAPTER VI

## CENTENARY AND THE SEXTON ERA

### The Magic of Geo. Sexton

At the time Rev. R. E. Smith made his interim report as president of the college in May 1921, a new president in the person of Dr. George S. Sexton had been elected by the Board of Trustees. Under the leadership of these two men Centenary College now enters a new era.

Dr. Sexton came to the presidency from a successful pastorate at the prestigious First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of Shreveport and a successful ministry in the affairs of the national church.

His early years in Arkansas provided the occasion for his call to the Methodist ministry, and he was received into the Little Rock Conference in 1887. Later he was transferred to Texas and served churches in Galveston and Houston, where his preaching and administrative leadership made possible the erection of St. Paul's Church in 1908. His success in fund raising brought him to the Methodist Board of Church Extension in 1909. In recognition of these achievements and of his growing stature in the ranks of Methodism, in 1910 Kentucky Wesleyan University granted him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1913 he was transferred from the Texas Conference to the Louisiana Conference and appointed pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport. Three years later in 1916 he was appointed to the Methodist General Conference Commission on the Representative Church in Washington D.C. He served two years in this capacity and was largely responsible for the erection of this church in our nation's capitol. Its architectural design is patterned after that of the Shreveport church and some years later it was given the name "The Foundry Methodist Church" in keeping with our Wesleyan heritage.

After completing this work in 1918 he was appointed to First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana, a second time to begin his final career in the Shreveport community.

In his pastorate of First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport Louisiana, he was quickly involved in the affairs of Centenary College and became a member of its Board of Trustees. Thus it was that this Board of Trustees should turn to him as the one leader who could move Centenary College into a new day and a new century. He was persuaded to take the presidency, and in June 1921 after the interim report of Dr. R. E. Smith to the Board of Trustees Dr. Sexton was introduced as the newly elected president of the college.

The Sexton years at Centenary were notable indeed. Because of his unusual abilities as an administrator, a fund raiser, and prophetic speaker he breathed a new life into the old college. Popular with all prominent citizens of the community, the trustees, faculty, and students, he was able to maintain a high degree of support for the college. Among his innovations was a football team called the

Centenary Gentlemen coached by the famous Bo McMillan, late of the "Praying Colonels" from Centre College, Kentucky. With the strong support from the business community this team vaulted into national prominence, playing and winning over such teams as L.S.U., Boston College, Tulane, S.M.U., and its local rival Louisiana Tech. This gave little Centenary College a new national exposure and brought to the campus students from all sections of the country. Dr. Sexton himself accompanied the team on many trips and became Centenary College's master salesman. He was tireless in raising funds, and through his efforts in the fall of 1921 a city-wide campaign brought in \$450,000 for permanent endowment. The General Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, added \$250,000.

### **Renaissance**

During its rebirth in the 1920's Centenary College moved forward under its two great mentors, Dr. George Sexton, president, and Dr. R. E. Smith, professor of Biblical Literature and head of the department. These two men of vastly different talents complemented each other in their mutual concern for the college. Dr. Sexton brought a worldly wisdom of fund raising, an intuitive perception of the motives that drive men to success, and a charisma that drew people from all walks of life to the causes he espoused. Dr. R. E. Smith, an impeccable academic scholar, a dynamic lecturer and preacher, electrified the campus and church community with a liberal and prophetic interpretation of the Bible as he made it walk about in the twentieth century.

We see this significant progress of the college under these two men in the march of statistics recorded year by year in the records of the Board of Trustees. For the academic year 1920-21 the annual income of the college was \$43,518, and the president's salary was \$6,000 plus house rent. The faculty of Centenary College during the academic year 1920-21 consisted of the Rev. R. E. Smith, Professor of Biblical Literature; Pierce Cline, History and Economics; Miss Laura Bishop, English; R. J. Kelly, Science; C. D. Stephenson, Mathematics; D. B. Raulins, Education; Roy Moore, Latin and Greek; George Reynolds was to be added later that year as Professor of Modern Language. (R. J. Kelly and D. B. Raulins had been associated with the Rev. R. E. Smith at Ruskin Cave College, Ruskin, Tennessee). There were three graduates that year, and Garland Smith, the son of Dr. R. E. Smith, was one of these three. The total student body that year numbered forty-three.

In May 1922 out of a student body of 112 there were seven graduates, six men and one woman, Velva Clark. Two were ministerial students under Dr. Smith; Larry Armstrong and Byron C. Taylor. The latter student had begun his college career with Dr. Smith at Ruskin Cave College, accompanied him to Florida Southern College, and moved to Centenary where he completed his last two years of college under his old professor. After graduating from seminary at Southern Methodist University he returned to Louisiana and became a distin-



guished alumnus of the college, served several years as vice president, and in 1977 was voted alumnus of the year and accorded a place in the College Hall of Fame.

### **A Progress Report**

In 1921 the endowment of Centenary College was \$90,000. As an indication of the great work being done by the president in leading the college into a new era of prosperity the Board of Trustees in 1929 reported an endowment of \$771,613 and a student body of 1048.

It was during this period that the college enlisted a first rate faculty including some great names long to be remembered as major contributors to the entire college community and the national academic fellowship. Among the distinguished names appearing on the Centenary faculty roster prior to the resignation of President Sexton in 1932 are the following:

Dean R. E. Smith, John H. Hardin, W. G. Phelps, C. E. Green, Pierce Cline, W. C. Gleason, Mrs. A. R. Campbell, John B. Enrikin, E. L. Ford, Mrs. Katherine French, A. B. King, S. D. Morehead, George Reynolds, S. A. Steger, A. M. Shaw, Jr., R. E. White, Bryant Davidson, Mary Warters, C. L. Odom, W. Gerard Banks, Francis Wheeler, B. Axel Johansson, and two coaches, Homer Norton and Curtis Parker.

By the year 1931, ten years after Dr. George Sexton became president, the college had established itself in the academic circles of the nation. The Christian Education Magazine in its March 1931 issue points this out:

"Centenary College has a faculty whose intellectual attainments are not surpassed by any school of its size in the South, and proof of other institutions' opinion of the school's faculty is indicated by academic degrees emanating from many of the famous universities of the world including Chicago, Iowa, L'Universite de Lyon, Columbia, Michigan, and Harvard.

Graduates of Centenary College are recognized as outstanding scholars in many institutions of the country, among them being Tulane, Vanderbilt, Wharton Institute, Duke, Columbia, Chicago, and Southern Methodist University."

As the decade of the 1920's came to an end, the crisis of survival for Centenary College had passed, but the spectre of the great depression now appeared.

After twelve strenuous years Dr. Sexton resigned in 1932 with the college owing him \$700 in back salary, and the Rev. W. Angie Smith, pastor of First Methodist Church, Shreveport, was named acting president. One year later in 1933 Dr. Pierce Cline was elected president and introduced a policy of economic austerity. Dr. Walter Lowrey, chief historian of the college, writes in a sesquicentennial brochure the following account of the depression years of 1929-1933:

"Dr. Pierce Cline, Professor of History, assumed the Presidency, and guided the College through the morass of problems, helped every step of the way by the counsel of Paul M. Brown, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Board, and Bishop

oyt M. Dobbs, Board Chairman, who made Centenary almost their full-time concern during the years of crisis. The faculty, strong academically, was even stronger in its faith in the College. Paid in script redeemable in goods at cooperating stores, and with the use of campus housing, they survived.

"Perhaps partially in gratitude for the faculty's dedicated service, and certainly also because of a strong tradition, the Board and the College Administration stood united in support of academic freedom for students and faculty. Never has the College wavered on this issue.

"Through frugality, wise management, generous donors, and public confidence in its leadership, the College came out of the Depression stronger than ever, poised for new greatness."

To point up the dedication of the faculty to the college and to their ideals of Christian education as late as 1944 the salary of Dean Smith as head of the Bible Department was set at \$3158 by the Board of Trustees.

We shall not pursue the history of the college through and beyond the depression era since we have fulfilled our purpose of providing the scenario for the Dean Smith years as they are intertwined with those of President George S. Sexton.



# CHAPTER VII

## A UNIQUE BIBLE TEACHER

### Transition

With the experience of Ruskin Cave College behind him and his brief term of service in Florida at an end, Dean Smith now turns to a new field of endeavor at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana. He was then forty-six years of age, a seasoned administrator, a mature scholar and preacher, sound of mind and body and possessed of a loving and talented family consisting of his wife, one son, and two daughters. Tragedy befell him during his first years at Centenary in the death of his beloved wife and helper, herself a capable teacher, on Oct. 21, 1923, and in the accidental death of his youngest daughter. These sad events added a new dimension to his rich and growing faith and brought a maturity to his life as he entered the middle years of his earthly journey.

But these years of transition also brought some new joys into his life. His son Garland went on to a brilliant career in teaching at Emory University, and his daughter Christine after graduate studies, also entered the teaching profession. Both were talented in music and the fine arts, and their own families reflected this brilliant heritage. The accomplishments of children bring to a father's heart secret joys and satisfactions too deep for words.

We must note at this point in our story the significant role of his second wife whom he married in 1926 after his return from the Holy Land. She was the widow of Dr. J. M. Henry, a distinguished Methodist Minister in the Louisiana Conference, and a church leader in her own right. She had been a teacher at Louisiana Polytechnic Institute (Now Louisiana Tech University) at Ruston, Louisiana and later worked for the Methodist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tennessee. She then came to Shreveport and taught in the Academy of Centenary College. She and her two children, James and Margaret Henry, entered the Smith home and a new and happy life began for both families. Mrs. Smith continued as an active church worker and a gracious and understanding wife and host in the busy Smith household. Especially during their declining years, Dean and Mrs. Smith were of great help and comfort to each other.

### What Manner of Man?

Our story thus far has traced the pilgrimage of our main character from childhood to manhood in various settings and now brings him to his permanent and final residence and to the most fruitful years of his illustrious career. The three elements of our story are now joined: Dean R. E. Smith, Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class.

At 46 years of age his basic philosophy of life, his Biblical theology, his teaching skills and the ultimate goals of his life were formed, and all his energies

could be directed to his life work. There yet remained almost forty good years of relentless work and service.

His basic attitude toward life made him ever a learner, and we note areas of growth and change in his thinking and writing during the next forty momentous years in the world's history. The sure foundations of his faith were established, his teaching and preaching skills refined, and his resources from past experiences rich and bountiful. These are the credentials he brought to his great new work at Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class. Jesus describes such a person in these words: "Every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old". Matt. 13:52

Dean Smith was a product of his day, a creature of his environment, a part of his ancestry, a character molded by loving hands and fashioned in the crucible of demanding experiences. But after we have traced his ancestry, noted his physical and mental characteristics, examined the schools he attended, and followed his professional progress through the years, we still find ourselves without the clue that explains such a person as Dean R. E. Smith!

There is within this kind of a man an existential dimension, unmeasurable; a spiritual synthesis of all the elements that cannot be explained by any one of them nor all of them in mere combination. Shakespeare could explain Julius Caesar by the unique way the elements were mixed in him. Dean Smith eludes these criteria.

Perhaps St. Paul gives us a better clue when he speaks of a "new creation" in Christ, and when he stands before King Agrippa to declare his ringing testimony: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." As so often happens in the work of God through history one among many is called forth and uniquely endowed for vocation. Let this be the explanation of our "Man from Kentucky."

### **His Physical Appearance**

Dean Smith presented a striking physical appearance. A man of medium height and of slight stature he radiated good health and a love for life. He dressed in strict decorum, a cream colored suit and bow tie or a black suit topped by a black fedora. He was neat and immaculate in his total grooming. As one of his students many years later aptly put it, he was the original "Mr. Klean". An accident when he was a small child injured one of his eyes and created a small scar on one side of his face.

In 1978 Dean Smith's niece, Mrs. Clara Evans Bennett, Mayfield, Kentucky, wrote this account of the accident: "His mother tied him in a child's rocking chair near the large fireplace one winter day and left him with his older sister. When she left the room Eddie struggled to get out and toppled his chair over onto the hearth striking the side of his head and injuring one of his eyes."

He wore a black patch over this eye, and the cord which held it in place was drawn back over his head with a few strands of hair carefully pressed down over



his balding pate. Soon after he came to Shreveport a prominent eye doctor and friend fashioned a small frosted glass for this injured eye. Those who met and knew him soon accepted this eye patch as part of the man and never regarded it as an unusual handicap. In his early years he learned the secret of a disciplined life, and he continued this regimen of habits into his later years to strengthen his physical health. In the 1925 Centenary College Yoncopin a small picture (he did not care to be photographed) shows him dressed in a dark suit, hat and gloves with an umbrella in his hand, and the title below reads simply "The Four Square Man".

### **A Dramatic Teacher**

As he stood before his class he projected an engaging image of dynamic health, sparkling wit, and a sensitive understanding of those around him. Ever courteous and kind he captured the interest of the students and aroused a keen desire to learn.

In his early teaching years Dean Smith did not have at his disposal the multimedia teaching resources such as slides, tapes, recordings and colored movies. Instead, he stepped up to the chalk board and with one deft stroke he outlined the coast of the Holy Land, drew in Galilee, the Jordan river and the Dead Sea, and then shaped up the Tigris-Euphrates valley and the Delta of Egypt. As his lecture proceeded, his chalk would draw routes, create symbols, and pin-point the locale of Biblical events.

Dean Smith's unique method of Bible study was to present stories and characters in dramatic form and to transpose them into a contemporary setting. He would act out David's visit to Saul as he slept in his army encampment, the blind Samson grinding for the Philistines, Jeremiah wearing his iron yoke, an angry Moses striking the rock, God calling the name of Cain after his crime. He would have Abraham getting a radio message from God, checking his route to Canaan, Joseph making a telephone call from Egypt, and Paul getting political reports from Rome. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were Abe, Ike, and Jake. Aquilla and Priscilla were the original A & P supermarket. The Good Samaritan might have been a black man in America. He would dramatize Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple or gently washing the feet of his disciples.

The occasion of Jesus's arrest when one of his followers drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Dean Smith described it as a "near miss". The sword wielder was aiming a bit to the left of his right ear. These vivid portrayals were enhanced by raising and lowering his voice, by dramatic pauses, by slyly turning his head to raise a crucial question, and by suddenly writing a word on the chalk board.

Frank Boydston, one of the athletes who finished Centenary in 1927 and a member of the Four Square Bible Class lived next door to Dean Smith on the campus in 1922-23. He remembers Dean Smith as follows:

"His classes were popular and respected by all segments of the campus. Early in the football season one of his classes included almost half the entire

am. One morning he listed eleven Biblical characters on the chalk board in column form. He then wrote "quarterback" by David's name and asked the class to complete the line up. Samson became the center, Joshua and Jonah the guards, etc. At the next class session Moses and Solomon were hired as coaches. A very few students missed class.

"The Dean enjoyed baseball and attended the home games. I played center field, and in one game I helped complete a double play and end the inning. After the game the Dean joined me to discuss the game, and I shall always remember his departing statement: 'All good plays in life contribute to victory and success'. Many incidents occurred during these days that had a bearing on my decisions to make my life fruitful and rewarding.

"As the years went by my presence at Four Square was a must. His spoken word, his gestures, his drama and his rendition of "Old October" became part of me. With a spirit of humility and reverence I owe my contentment and faith to a great extent to Dean R. E. Smith".

We noted earlier Dean Smith's aversion to "brutal games and sports" while at Ruskin Cave College. But his Centenary years changed all this, and he followed with interest the success and failure of the football, basket ball, and baseball teams of the College as Frank Boydston so well described. While the football team was training one summer near Mena, Arkansas, Dean Smith was part of the entourage and taught a course in Bible in the summer school session there.

### **The Soul of an Artist**

Dean Smith was a lover of the arts. His soul was alive to the beauty of the world, and in classical literature he was at home. In his college years a liberal arts education required Latin, Greek, philosophy, and theology as well as classical literature. Browning was his favorite, but his lectures were filled with Shakespeare, Milton, Keats and Shelly. He enjoyed great music, and as a young man he learned the cornet and guitar. Many of us remember his enriching course, "Great Poets and their Theology".

These resources he brought to his Bible courses. He saw and lifted up the poetry and beautiful symbolism of the Bible from the creation story to the hallelujah chorus of Revelation. His strong, emotional reading and interpretation of the great passages made a lasting impression on his students.

In my own experience the promise passages of Genesis live with me in eternal beauty and meaning: the rainbow in the sky, the stability of the earth expressed in the promise "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease". He read for the class the poetic passages of the great Second Isaiah pleading for the restoration of Israel; the eighth century prophets proclaiming God's demand for justice and righteousness; the Psalms; Jesus giving the Beatitudes and describing the love and mercy of God in caring for birds, flowers, growing grain; and the moving story of the prodigal son and the forgiving father.



His annual rendition of James Whitcomb Riley's "Old October" was a high light in the chapel service and a never-to-be-forgotten experience in the Four Square Bible Class.

On his return from a trip to Europe and the Holy Land in 1926 his first chapel address dealt with his experience in Florence, Italy, the cradle of the arts for the Christian world. In his book **Old Lands Ever New** he writes of Florence:

"Enfolded in those Tuscan hills, lulled by the silvery Arno, Florence sleeps under the silent stars, the most sensitive city of the world. . . The first and last thing I saw in Florence were the glorious bronze doors of Lorenzo Ghiberti, of the Baptistry, and the Duoma Cathedral with its Campanile. First, because I could not sleep until I had seen them; last, because I rushed to bid them farewell even while our party was going to the station to take the train. Michelangelo said of these huge bronze doors that they were good enough for the doors of Paradise. Ghiberti has in bronze the leading scenes of the Bible, grouped in panels of such exquisite delicacy and beauty that one can never tire of gazing.

"It seems that one could write forever of Florence, but I must stay only to speak of Casa Guidi, the house where Mrs. Browning died. Her simple tomb stands in the English cemetery of Florence. After placing her tomb over the sacred spot Browning never visited the cemetery again. He knew that she was not where he last saw her body disappear beneath the Florentine roses. To frequent that spot would only revive the somber details of pall and bier which are but unpleasant episodes in a soul's deliverance from its prison body. The last rays of the sun fell upon the snow-white tomb, and looking far off to the amaranthine mountains veiled in mist, I thought of Browning's description of the sensation of dying and the first few minutes beyond:

"First, a peace out of pain,  
Then a light, then - thy breast!  
O, soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again!  
And - God be the rest!"

### **Faith and History in Biblical Study**

In the first quarter of the twentieth century in America the historical method of Biblical study was a radical new approach and created suspicion and opposition on the part of many sectors of the church. It was referred to as "higher criticism" and was an opprobrium to the fundamentalist theologian. Dean Smith, with his rich background of graduate studies in Biblical research and his knowledge of the various translations in Greek and Latin brought this new approach to his work with college students, training schools, and his Four Square Bible Class.

Dr. Webb Pomeroy, a former student and now the successor to the great Dean Smith as the T. L. James Professor of Religion in Centenary College, gives us an in depth appraisal of his old professor:

"A generation ahead of other world renowned Biblical scholars and theologians, Dean R. E. Smith achieved an intellectual understanding of the Scriptures which freed biblical study from the traditions in which systematic theology dictated the methods and conclusions of such study. He allowed the Bible to speak directly, and on its own terms. Dean Smith was a most remarkable scholar. In a time when scholarship was generally suspect and sometimes met with outright hostility, he advanced far beyond the accepted understandings of his day, yet, without offending or losing the understanding of his pupils. In a highly sensitive position, he was able to lead students who had virtually no background in academic biblical study, into a new world of scholarship and understanding. This was achieved, always, with a deep concern for and love of each individual student.

"The scriptures came alive and real in Dean Smith's classes. With great skill, imagination, and humor he retold the biblical stories of the creation, of David, Saul, Gideon, Amos, Peter, Paul, and Jesus, creating a sense of importance and meaning in all that the text recorded of them. In the lectures of Dean Smith when God walked with Abraham, when God talked to Moses, when Balaam's ass spoke to his astonished owner, when Jesus taught the multitudes, students felt that they had been brought to a new understanding of truths that went beyond the literal interpretations of Biblical passages. Dean Smith gave the student, not only information, but something of far greater importance. He created an interest in and an attitude toward the Bible that led the student into greater areas of learning and spiritual growth.

"Perhaps this can best be communicated in the following way: The Dean seemed to have that sure and certain life of faith and grace always expressed through joy, humor, and love in his classes and in his personal relationships. Many of us can say about this man, 'I am who I am, in large measure, because of what Dean R. E. Smith has done for me through his teaching, his joy, his intellect and his love.' "

### **Progressive Revelation**

Perhaps the key to Dean Smith's approach to an overall understanding of the Bible as a revealed word from God, or an "inspired" Book, is his doctrine of progressive revelation. By this he meant the gradual unfolding of the Biblical faith in terms of man's understanding of God in history. The more primitive stories in the Old Testament of God's dealing with men as a capricious, vengeful, and wrathful deity are to be understood as only the beginning of man's theological quest. From a tribal God who sends total destruction (men, women, children and animals) to the enemies of the Hebrew people the Bible moves upward in its revelation to a universal Father-God possessing the qualities of compassion, justice, and righteousness as portrayed by the great eighth century prophets, Amos and Hosea. He would draw a chart on the chalk board indicating an upward curve beginning with Moses discovering God's true name, through the giant peaks of Jeremiah and Second Isaiah, to the final summit of the New Testament cross



on Golgotha's hill with God's own Son hanging there. Thus he was not locked into Biblical literalism but always tested each story and historical event and each theological concept by the highest revealed truth in the Christ event of Jesus Nazareth.

To a later generation of Biblical scholars this approach is a standard procedure, but to his generation it was a radical departure.

Realizing the narrow background of most of his students, Dean Smith never attempted to destroy the opinions or theological ideas they already held, no matter how childish or absurd. As earlier noted he came not to destroy but to fulfill. Once when some of us were disturbed about the Genesis stories (there are two) of creation, he referred us to a library source book containing the Babylonian story of creation earlier than those of Genesis. Did Joshua really make the sun stand still? He would then point out that this is but a quotation from a non-canonical book called Jasher. (All this before the days of the **Interpreter's Bible** and the German scholars' process of demythologizing the Bible!) To awaken interest in further study he might ask if the two accounts in Mark of Jesus' feeding the multitudes are of the same event or two different events? Did Paul change his mind about the Second Coming of Christ in his later letters? Are all passages of the Bible equally inspired of God? He would then point out that Paul wrote some things about women in his Corinthian letters and admits that they are his opinion and not a word from God. (I Cor. 7:25 and II Cor. 8:8).

As he moved his students from their first introduction to the Bible to a mature reflection on theological concepts, he laid a sure foundation of faith at each step. Always handling the Bible with reverence, he nevertheless did not hesitate to subject it to vigorous historical criticism in terms of the most respected scholarship. In good Wesleyan tradition he brought together "the two so long divided knowledge and vital piety."

### The Range of His Teachings

Before coming to Centenary College, where he specialized in Biblical literature, Dean Smith had taught in other academic disciplines such as Latin and Greek, sociology, philosophy, Church history and other liberal arts subjects.

One of his former students, Mr. Thomas Lackey Girault, in Government work in Colorado and president of the Board of Trustees for State Colleges of Education in that state, wrote Dean Smith a personal letter in 1950. He says:

"I speak often of my experiences at Ruskin Cave College. There is no end to what I could write about my obligation to you and that institution, but now I shall make but one reference. In politics as well as religion, I am a little left of center. As strange as it may seem to you I owe it to the influence of a great teacher who conducted a Saturday morning class in sociology. At the time I was not aware that my own philosophy was being remoulded for the future. I owe it to nothing less than your great inspirational lectures at the Saturday morning hour. I entered your college as a reactionary southerner. I left the campus with a liberal philosophy."

both in politics and religion.” (Dean Smith was thirty-one years of age when he took over Ruskin Cave College).

It is strange indeed that as early as 1905 Dean Smith would be teaching a course in sociology, a relatively new academic discipline at that time, and turn the thinking of his students toward a liberal philosophy in religion and politics.

We know also that he was a Latin teacher and produced a learning aid in the form of simple rhymes. On one occasion two of his former students from Ruskin Cave College visited him at his Shreveport home, and Mrs. Smith overheard an animated conversation in Latin coming from these three old friends.

We know that classical literature, especially the great poets, filled him mind and soul and were part of his courses offered at Centenary College.

He was an avid reader of news reports and weekly magazines dealing with political and social events and the actions of national and world leaders. Each week he wrote a brief article in the Four Square Bible Class Bulletin dealing with current events under the titles of “Signs-O-The-Times” and his mysterious correspondent “Dear Elmer”. These reveal the amazing range of his thinking and his perceptive evaluation of the events occurring during these momentous years. Samplings of this collection of his writings are reserved for a later chapter.

### **Dean Smith Develops the Bible Department**

From his arrival at Centenary in 1920 until his final retirement from the college in 1949 Dean Smith carried practically the full load of the department of Bible and Religious Education. At intervals he was assisted by D. B. Raulins and Sam Carter, two of his early students.

The college catalog for 1924-25 lists nine courses in Biblical Literature and five in Religious Education. The catalog states the following additional required activities: “Practical training in preaching, Sunday School organization, evangelism, liturgy, and church history. Field work is offered in the hospitals, jails, and missions for ministerial students.”

In 1929-30 the college offered twenty-two courses in Bible and eight in Religious Education.

By 1931-32 the Bible Department had been expanded to include a total of thirty-five courses including Greek New Testament, Homiletics, Philosophy of Theism, Ethics, Great Poets of the Bible, Social Institutions and Ideals of the Bible, Applied Christianity, and Great Poets and their Theology. These give some indication of the range and depth of the mind of Dean Smith.

Dean Smith’s reputation as a teacher and Biblical scholar soon brought invitations for his services from all sections of the country. His course in Bible always drew the largest crowd in Leadership Training Schools, Pastor’s Schools, and summer conferences. He spent one summer teaching at Emory University.

In the decade of the 1930’s Dean Smith carried a heavy load at Centenary College, became more deeply involved with his great Four Square Bible class, and continued his work in Leadership Schools and Pastor’s Conferences.



He was a popular speaker in great demand in the Shreveport community. Churches, civic organizations, banquets, radio programs, and religious conferences sought his services. These were the years when he was deeply involved in the national controversy over the Prohibition amendment, and much of his energy was expended in its defense and later in the fight for local option.

In 1945 the retirement age overtook Dean Smith, and the Board of Trustees granted emeritus status to him, to Dr. W. G. Phelps, and to Dr. Katherine French. Dean Smith continued some teaching at the college until 1949 at which time he retired permanently from the faculty after completing twenty-nine years of strenuous work in that capacity. He was succeeded by Rev. Wm. P. Fraser, one of his former students and a distinguished minister of the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Church. Following a brief tenure Dr. Fraser re-entered the pastoral ministry and was followed by Dr. Webb Pomeroy who was the first recipient of the T. L. James distinguished Chair of Religion. Dr. Pomeroy, a former student of the great Dean Smith, carries on the tradition he established and himself is a distinguished Biblical scholar, a popular teacher in great demand throughout national church circles.

### His Published Writings

We have already referred to his book **Old Lands-Ever New** which he wrote after his return from the Holy Land in 1926.

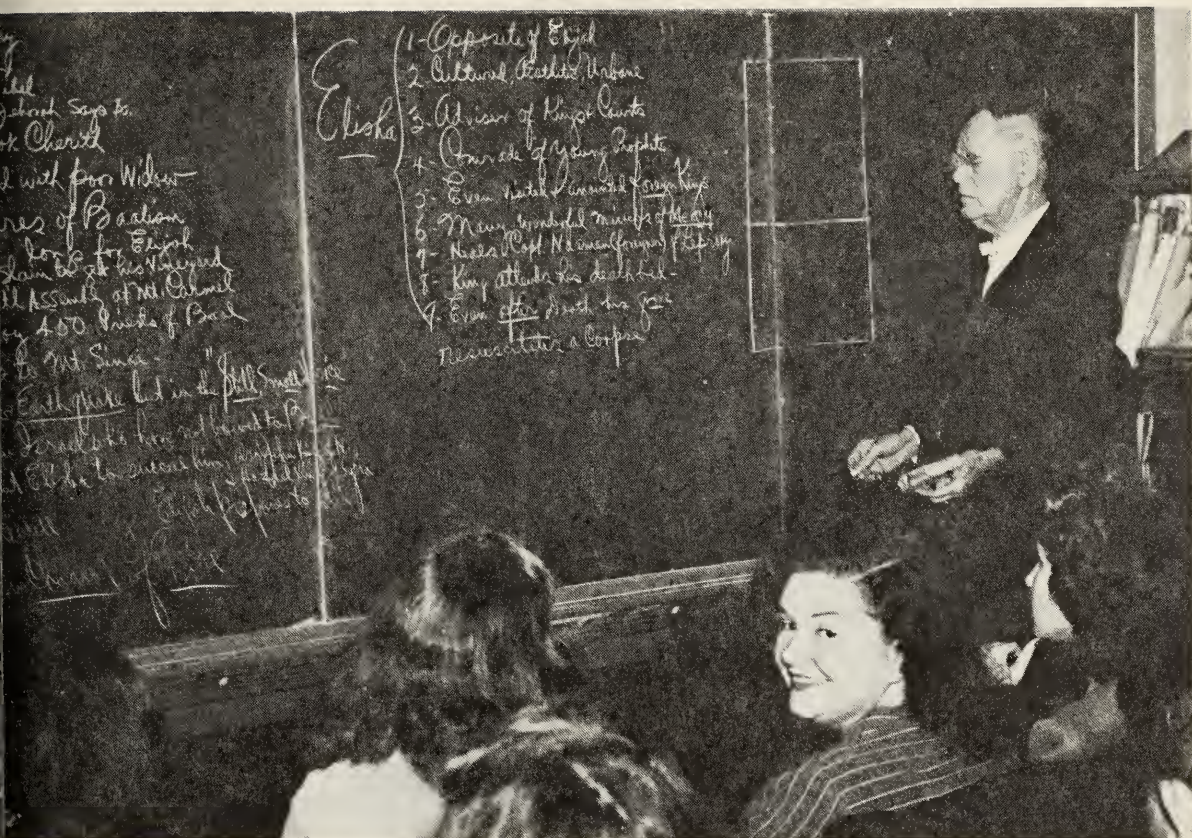
In 1930 he published a book **How To Study the Bible** in three sections which was used as a combination text book and notebook by college students. That same year a more popular book entitled **Searching the Scriptures** was published including 600 Bible questions and answers.

In 1934 he published a small booklet entitled **Rethinking Methodism - The Charming Story Retold**.

Percy Browne has made available the only known copy of a lengthy poem describing each book of the Bible in a four line rhyming verse which Dean Smith planned to publish. We have no date of its writing, but we give here a sample of its style:

“Genesis tells how the world was made  
By God’s creative hand,  
Exodus, how the Hebrews marched  
To gain the promised land.”

During his teaching career at Centenary College he published a number of Bible study helps covering the entire Bible. Many of these are still used by his former students. He also wrote a study course for the Methodist Adult Student magazine in 1932.



Dean R. E. Smith leading a group of students in Bible study at Centenary College. Note his use of chalk board and graphic illustrations.



## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **A BIBLE CLASS IS CREATED AND CALLED**

#### **How It All Began**

As earlier noted in this chronicle when Dean Smith transferred from the Florida Conference of the Methodist Church to the Louisiana Conference in 1920 he was expecting to serve as pastor of a small church as well as the head of the Bible Department at Centenary College. But this did not materialize, and Rev. F. S. Walton was appointed to the Texas Avenue Methodist Church (later to be the Park Avenue Methodist Church and still later the Lakeview Methodist Church instead of Dean Smith in the fall of that year. Evidently some tentative agreement had been reached between Dean Smith and Bishop Hay of the Louisiana Conference or the Bishop of the Florida Conference in regard to this appointment. In the Methodist system when the Bishop's cabinet meets to assign the pastors to their churches, many changes are made at the last minute so that the principle of "every church with a pastor and every pastor with a church" will prevail. His appointment in 1920 was then made to Centenary College as professor of Biblical literature. This proved to be a hidden blessing since he was then free to accept the position as teacher of the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Church when the offer was made.

Within a decade after he came to Centenary College his life became more and more involved with the Four Square Bible Class, and in his later years it was his great obsession.

Let us turn now to the history of this great class as one of the threefold factors in our unfolding story and its contextual relationship to the Adult Wesleyan Bible Class movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

#### **The Sunday School Movement**

The Sunday School movement in America beginning in 1824 and flourishing during the last quarter of that century provided the impetus for the development of Adult Bible Classes in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The movement from its inception, was inter-denominational in character promoting better method in the local church Sunday Schools and developing both a philosophy of education and a body of curriculum materials based on Bible texts entitled "Uniform Lessons". From Sunday School Unions in such cities as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago there evolved the great International Sunday School Association, promoting its county, state, national, and international conventions which were significant events in the life of the church. The teaching program of the church based on Bible knowledge was the major theme. It is interesting to note that in 1928 W. A. McKennon, the long tenured Sunday School Superintendent at First Methodist



Episcopal Church, South, in Shreveport, was a delegate to the World Sunday School Convention meeting in Los Angeles, California. At a later date this organization merged with the National Council of Churches and became the Department of Christian Education within the Council. It is this organization that holds the copyright for the Revised Standard Version of the Bible which is now the standard translation used by most of the churches. It continues to produce the International Sunday School Lessons as developed by the International Sunday School association earlier.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was an early participant in this Inter-denominational Sunday School movement both as a contributor and as a recipient of its curriculum developments. As early as 1871 the Methodist General Conference elected a Sunday School Secretary in the person of Dr. A. G. Haygood (who later became one of the Bishops). He gave much attention to the Adult Bible Class movement and launched a new piece of literature called the Sunday School Magazine which contained lesson materials for adult classes and special helps for teachers.

In 1910 the General Conference created a Wesley Bible Class Department and elected on a quadrennial basis a superintendent whose work was closely related to that of the Superintendent of Teacher-Training. In 1914 the various religious education enterprises as outlined above were consolidated into a General Sunday School Board by the General Conference of the church. Provision was made for the promotion of Wesley Bible Classes on a district and conference basis and the formation of Wesley Bible Class Federations. Dr. Charles D. Bulla became Superintendent of the Wesley Bible Class Department of the General Board and by 1918 had launched the Adult Student, which became the official publication for adult classes.

### **Adult Classes at First Methodist**

First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Shreveport responded to this new interest in adult classes, and by the year 1914 there were eight so-called Wesley Bible Classes under various names. One of those classes was the Baird Class, and this honored name is perpetuated in one of the great halls of the church complex.

This Baird Class seems to be the prototype of the Wesley Bible Classes of a later era. It was organized in September 1903 open to all adults both men and women. As stated in its constitution that year:

“The object of the class shall be Bible Study, soul winning, Christian Culture, Mutual Helpfulness, and the Extension of Christ's Kingdom throughout the world”.

Evidently the Baird Class is the forerunner of most of the present adult classes in First Methodist Church.

The Wesley Bible Classes of this early period were more or less independent units within the church and Sunday School and developed their own organizations and program.

The Four Square Bible Class in many respects is a product of this nineteenth Century Sunday School movement especially as it developed in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the first quarter of the twentieth century. This Sunday School movement encompassed four significant factors that directly apply to the Four Square Bible Class.

1. The central purpose of the Sunday School movement was to enroll all church members and others in a systematic study of the Bible through a uniform curriculum designed to cover the entire Bible in four year cycles. This was known as the "International Lessons," and most adult classes in all churches followed these outlines. The Four Square Bible Class used these outlines, and Dean Smitt developed his own commentaries for his lesson-lectures.

2. It was primarily a layman's movement (including women, of course) and developed a vast army of Bible students who in turn became teachers and workers in the Sunday School. For all those who attended it was also a source of genuine Christian fellowship and service.

3. It was interdenominational in character in its conventions, organization, and approach to Bible study, and sought to bring into church membership all adults who attended.

4. It was a powerful evangelistic and missionary program with a world-wide outreach grounded in the faith that out of sincere Bible study would come a life of righteousness.

A glance at the Four Square Bible Class Constitution formulated in 1923 will reveal its indebtedness to the International Sunday School Association's ideals and purposes.

The period from 1914 to 1920 was one of renewed interest in Bible classes at the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana. Various new classes were appearing in the Sunday School including men's and women's classes as well as mixed classes. Out of this new interest and effort there arose a class of business men whose history we will now pursue.

### **Roots of the Four Square Bible Class**

Dr. John L. Scales provides us with the earliest extant historical records pertaining specifically to the Four Square Bible Class. Dr. Scales, one of the early class presidents, was an outstanding member of the church and Sunday School for many years, a prominent professional figure of Shreveport, a graduate and patron of Old Centenary College, and one of the early members of the Four Square Bible Class. An article written by him was carried in the Four Square Herald March 6, 1927.

"Having been a member of Four Square Bible Class and its immediate predecessors from the beginning and interested in Sunday School work for many years it seemed to me that some reminiscences of this great class and some observations about Sunday School affairs in general, might not be amiss at this time.



"Many of us can remember when the Sunday School was considered an institution mainly for children, conducted and taught by a few devoted women. Then followed a new era and there came orderly business methods, intelligent propaganda, an opportunity for self expression, the exercise of the social instinct, class organization activities, and real Bible study for adults. There was an immediate response with an amazing increase in the number of men and women who found in the Sunday School not only a field big enough and broad enough for the exercise of all their intellect and energy but a satisfying religious experience as well.

"The present Four Square Bible Class is the direct lineal descendant of the Wesley Adult Bible Class, consisting of both men and women, a number of years ago, and supplied the first need of the church and Sunday School for a class for mature men and women. Changing conditions later seemed to demand a discontinuance of a mixed class and the men formed the nucleus of the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Church, South, which under the able presiding of Mr. W. H. Booth and the brilliant teaching of Mr. O. A. Wright, became wide and favorably known and demonstrated what a combination of executive ability and teaching ability could do in building up a men's class. After the coming of the great Dean Smith the class made more progressive changes, adapting to its needs the orchestra, the radio, the press, business methods of finance and all those details of organization and administration that appeal to the social instinct."

From this earliest summary of Four Square history by Dr. Scales we learn two significant facts:

First, the Four Square Bible Class has its roots deep in the life of the First United Methodist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana. (The old Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has gone through two mergers, and the official name of the national body is now The United Methodist Church). This church situated at the head of Texas Street, where the old Texas Cattle Trail turns southwestward had become one of the largest and most prestigious churches in the Methodist connection. Its spire and cross dominated the down-town skyline, and its membership always included prominent and service minded Shreveport citizens. It is vitally linked to Centenary College as well as being the original source and present base of operation of the Four Square Bible Class.

The second significant factor we derive from Dr. Scales' earliest records and personal memory is that the Wright Class, which is the immediate progenitor of the Four Square Bible Class, came out of the Wesley Adult Bible Class prior to 1918, and this class was made up of both men and women. Therefore, when at a later date the Four Square Bible Class for men only opened its membership to women, it had historical precedent for this action.

### **The Wright Class 1918 - 1919**

From the brief history supplied by Dr. John L. Scales we know that prior to 1918 there was a large Wesley Adult Bible Class consisting of both men and



women. In 1918 the class divided, the men formed the nucleus of a new class consisting of business men, and O. A. Wright became the teacher. Dr. George Sexton, who was pastor of the church at that time, notes that this was the only business men's Bible Class in the city! He further states that W. H. Booth was president and H. H. Bain treasurer. The class was known as the Wright Class, and under the popular teaching of O. A. Wright the class grew rapidly to a membership of 200 and had to move to the main auditorium of the church.

We do not have any records kept by the Wright Class, but it must have had excellent leadership in its officers to build the class into such a large and vigorous membership in such a brief time. James S. Reily, one of the Four Square Bible class historians (and a charter member) notes in one of the early bulletins that, "during this time the Wright Class enjoyed possibly the greatest attendance and exhibited the most enthusiasm for Bible study and Christian service that had been witnessed in Shreveport."

Early in 1920 because of business schedule Mr. Wright had to give up the class, and Judge S. C. Fullilove became the teacher. His professional schedule called him out of the city much of the time, and he was soon forced to resign his post as teacher. With no regular teacher available the class began to decline and soon was on the verge of disbanding. It was at this juncture of events that Mr. Frank R. Hicks enters our story. As already noted one Sunday in August 1920 he was the only member present. He spent the time in thoughtful prayer about the class asking God to send a teacher and save the class.

### **The Business Men's Bible Class**

Mr. Frank R. Hicks is a good example of what one man can do when he brings together an earnest prayer and immediate action. Many great and successful ventures hang by a single thread at some point in their development. If the thread had been broken on that bleak August Sunday in 1920, there may not have been a Four Square Bible Class. So across the slender thread of this one man's prayer, divine energy moved to create a new community of caring Christians called the Four Square Bible Class.

Mr. Hicks soon called together a group of men who had been members of the Wright Class. Those who answered this call late in the year 1920 were S. J. Anderson, S. C. Fullilove, Dr. George Sexton, W. J. Hutchinson, T. S. Hutchinson, W. I. Woodruff, Vic Fulton, J. W. Peyton, H. J. Marshall and B. C. McKennon. These names are noteworthy and represent families who have made great contributions to the history of First Methodist Church and to the Shreveport Community.

At a subsequent meeting of this group a new organization was formed with a Mr. McCall as president and S. J. Anderson as secretary-treasurer. One of the first orders of business was to adopt a name for the class, and so the group became known as the Business Men's Bible Class.

James S. Reily notes that at this time the group turned immediately to the highest priority of business; namely, "to secure a teacher who could be depended

upon to attend regularly and who was well versed in Biblical knowledge." Dr. R. E. Smith had come to Centenary College a few months prior to this meeting and was becoming known on the campus as an outstanding Biblical scholar and teacher. The class turned to him as the answer to its need. We have no records of a committee action or the nature of the first interview with the new professor. What questions did he ask? What stipulations did he lay before them? What contractual agreements were forthcoming?

The records do show that this new "man from Kentucky" was induced to become the teacher of the Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana, in November or December of 1920, and on the first Sunday he stood before seven men to deliver his first Biblical lecture! Seven is a good Biblical number, the symbol of perfection.

During 1921, under the presidency of Dr. John L. Scales and with Mr. Axel Swanson as secretary, new features were introduced each Sunday to promote friendliness and good fellowship. The leadership genius of Mr. Swanson is credited with these activities, and his name is forever associated with the early beginnings of the Four Square Bible Class.

Thus, we see that prior to the naming of the class Four Square it was already a thriving organization with capable business men directing its aggressive program. Under this group of leaders over 200 men were enrolled. It soon outgrew its quarters in the church building, and arrangements were made to meet in a room in the Caddo Parish Court House and eventually the Shreveport City Hall.

As early as Christmas 1922 an attendance goal of 200 by February 1, 1923, was announced in a special Christmas Bulletin from the Men's Bible Class meeting in City Hall. Axel Swanson was president; Dean R. E. Smith was listed as teacher; and Dr. Cleanth Brooks was pastor of the First Methodist Church. Even at this early date the class had an orchestra, a glee club, and a quartet.

Evidently early in its history, the Four Square Class regarded itself as a direct descendant of these earlier classes, and a list of past presidents printed for the annual banquet in 1928 reads as follows: S. C. Fullilove, Dr. John L. Scales, Axel Swanson, A. Glenn Flournoy, H. H. Bain, and T. E. Hodges.





TEACHERS OFFICERS COMMITTEES —  
 CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO—  
 FOUR SQUARE BIBLE CLASS  
 CITY HALL AUDITORIUM 9.30 A.M.

Officers of the Four Square Bible Class 1935. President Frank Brown is fifth from left on front row, Percy Browne, sixth president and a charter member fourth from left, and Dean R. E. Smith end of first row on right.



# CHAPTER IX

## A FOUR SQUARE SUCCESS

### What's In A Name?

The Business Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Shreveport, Louisiana was the class to which Dean R. E. Smith was invited as teacher. Since some other churches had adult classes of the same name, this class at First Methodist Church often received mail (including bills) that should have been delivered to other churches. Therefore, at the regular business meeting of the class on March 16, 1923, with the president, Axel Swanson, presiding, a new name was adopted. The minutes of that meeting read as follows:

"The subject of adopting a distinctive name was brought up, the consensus of opinion being that as other classes in the city had the same name it was confusing. The treasurer, Brother S. O. Williams, stated that he had received from time to time bills charged to the Business Men's Bible Class of other churches. After a short discussion Brother C. M. Richmond presented the name of Four Square Bible Class, which upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, was adopted".

At this same meeting the president appointed a committee empowered to draw up a constitution for consideration at the next class business meeting.

We do not have a record of the discussion of the proposed name Four Square Bible Class. No doubt Mr. C. M. Richmond had reasons of his own when he proposed the name Four Square. Some religious groups had been using the term for many years and still do. The Y.M.C.A. in many of its programs use the term "The Four Square Life" indicating the four phases of a well developed Christian life: mental, physical, spiritual, and social. The scripture basis is Luke 2:52, "and Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man". This may well be the all-encompassing goals of the Four Square Bible Class for the individual members and for the class as a whole in its program of Bible study and service outreach.

### Out of the Bible

Four Square is a good Biblical term in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and certainly is full of rich symbolism. The Hebrew altar described in Exodus was five cubits square (about 7½ feet). In Ezekiel's vision the court surrounding the altar was four-square (100 cubits or 150 feet). The Holy of Holies, or inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple which enclosed the Ark of the Covenant, was a perfect cube measuring twenty cubits in its width, length and height. But perhaps the most graphic and symbolic of all is John's vision of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, prepared in Heaven by God and in the new age to be lowered onto the earth (Rev. 21). It is a city "four-square" fifteen hundred miles each way

and also the same in height! (Where will God put such a city?) It symbolizes perfection in all aspects of earthly existence, and God will dwell there with his people.

Whatever was in the minds of that small group of men meeting at the First Methodist Church, South, in Shreveport on March 16, 1923, they brought forth a name and a symbol for all future generations of class members to contemplate!

We can be certain of one factor in the adoption of this name: the great Dean Smith was fully aware of all the Biblical symbolism involved and no doubt commented fully on them at the time the proposed name was adopted.

Perhaps the Four Square Bible Class is called of God to prepare for such a city, to listen to its teachers, to act on behalf of God's love, justice and mercy, to follow in the footsteps of Abraham and all others of faith who according to Hebrews "look forward to the City which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God". (11:10).

In any case members of this great class early in its history regarded its name as something deeply symbolic. In March 1927 Dr. E. L. Sanderson wrote this in the Four Square Herald: "Four Square is a Lighthouse standing four square to all the winds that blow. The lives of men criss-crossing and sailing up and down, like ships at sea, are keeping near the course because of her Beacon Light".

In 1925 at a Four Square luncheon Mrs. C. Y. Brandau was the speaker and her topic was "The City Four-Square". In part she said: "the Four-Square City described in the Apocalypse can be understood as follows: The north side is the magnetic pole representing God. The east side represents light, intelligence and understanding that come from Christ. The south side represents warm divine love. The west side represents truth which comes from God".

And so we see that the name Four Square arouses our interest and speculation and challenges each new generation of class members to reinterpret its meaning for themselves.

### **The First Four Square Constitution**

On March 16, 1923, when the business meeting adopted the new name of Four Square Bible Class a committee was appointed to prepare a constitution and submit a report at the next meeting.

This historic committee was made up of Dr. R. E. Smith, teacher; Dr. R. H. Wynn, Presiding Elder of the Shreveport District of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and Mr. Percy Browne, a Shreveport attorney. At the next meeting, April 20, 1923, Mr. Percy Browne, the vice president of the class, presented the new constitution prepared by the committee and it was duly adopted.

The historic purpose of the Four Square Bible Class is stated as follows in the constitution:

1. To increase the number of persons who regularly attend the public instruction and study of God's word.
2. To promote good fellowship and brotherhood.
3. To provide wholesome entertainment.



4. To foster and support charitable and benevolent enterprises.
5. To train for leadership in the service of God's Kingdom.
6. To deepen our own religious life and to assist others to do the same.

This is an all-encompassing purpose and offers a challenge to every generation of Four Square members.

At this same meeting (April 20, 1923) the first officers and committees under the new Four Square Bible Class constitution were appointed by president Axel Swanson as follows: John Welsh, corresponding secy.; C. C. Stringfellow, inter-class secretary; and Frank W. Todd, recording secretary; Brotherhood Committee: Hollace H. Bain, chairman; Jas. S. Reily; W. E. Walraven; Tom E. Hodges; and Tom Marbury. Evangelistic Committee: Tom G. Pears, chairman; J. M. Collins; W. E. Connell; Abel Bliss; and J. W. Peyton. Music Committee: Pat E. Townsley, chairman; C. M. Richmond; and John E. King. Publicity Committee: C. M. Richmond, chairman; J. R. Wallace; W. F. Johnson; L. G. Knight; and John A. Keel. Social Committee: Glen Flournoy, chairman; E. A. Reily; G. F. McCormick; Edward L. Mann; R. M. Spaulding; Chas. A. Henley; and David H. Edgin. Editor: J. R. Wallace.

This Constitution continued in effect until 1942 when it was amended to allow women to be admitted as associate members and to create some new committees.

### **Business Methods in Four Square**

Being a class for business men the Four Square Bible Class enjoyed the benefits of their wisdom, promotional skills and philosophy of success. Of course, the membership included lawyers and prominent political figures, members of the medical profession, plantation owners, and persons from the field of education. But it was the organizational genius of the early group of officers such as Axel Swanson, H. H. Bain, J. S. Reily, Tom Hodges, C. M. Richmond, Percy Browne, J. S. Welsh, S. D. Williams, and Glenn Flournoy that made possible the rapid growth and outreach of the class.

It is to be noted also that present at the early business meetings of the Business Men's Bible Class were the church leaders, Dr. George Sexton, Pastor of First Methodist Church and later President of Centenary College, and Dr. R. H. Wynn, the Presiding Elder of the Shreveport District, who previously was President of Centenary College. These important church leaders gave their influence to the Four Square Bible Class as they had to the earlier classes. Dr. Wynn was a member of the committee that prepared the first constitution of the class.

The class streamlined its organizational structure through an executive committee composed of elected officers, chairmen of committees, and the immediate past president. This committee proposed the budget and made its recommendations to the monthly business meeting. In this way, careful planning was made possible and the Sunday morning session of the class was devoted only to worship, fellowship and the Bible lesson brought by Dean Smith.



## **The Executive Secretary**

As the Four Square class grew and its program expanded, the decision was made to name an executive secretary who would devote his time to the various affairs of the class, such as correspondence with other classes, handling the funds, and publishing a class paper. In 1924 a young ministerial student by the name of Harry Brown, called in friendly jest "Bishop Brown," became the popular secretary and established an office in the rear of the First Methodist Church. His salary was \$50.00 per month. In 1929 he became Assistant Pastor of North Memorial Methodist Church and later was appointed to the Methodist Church at Denham Springs, La. Following this he was appointed to the Church at Springfield, Louisiana and continued to serve as a local preacher supply.

At the time Harry Brown was executive secretary of the Four Square Class in 1924 it was noted that he was the only paid full time secretary of an Adult Bible Class in the United States! During his term of office he took as his bride Miss Lucille McGuffey, and the two were married by Dr. Robert E. Goodrich after he gave the Four Square lesson on that particular Sunday. The bride and groom were both active students at Centenary College.

The next secretary, elected in 1927, was Tom Burbank, a railroad employee and a member of the Central Christian Church who had a long tenure in the office. He introduced the monthly Four Square Magazine in March 1927 and a newspaper type publication called "The Four Square Herald" which purported to bring and exchange news of various men's Bible Classes over the country. Luther Grounds, a Centenary student, along with Percy Browne acted as assistant editors.

Mr. Burbank corresponded with various Adult Classes over the nation and shared news with them. In 1924 a National Federation of Men's Bible Classes was organized with headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio, with the motto "Serving Men To Get Men to Serve". Through the efforts of Mr. Burbank, Four Square became a member of this group in 1934, and he was named National Counselor for the State of Louisiana.

In 1935 Dr. J. M. Gorton, became President and called for class action to name a secretary-treasurer since the constitution made no specific provision for such an office. He asked that the executive committee elect a secretary from names submitted. Mr. Harry Deal was then elected and took over the office January 1, 1936. Harry Deal was indeed a "Man for all seasons" in the Four Square Class and endeared himself to the entire membership. He handled much of the class business as executive secretary, setting up banquets, arranging details for the annual barbecue, the special days, and serving as publicity agent to the newspapers. In 1946 Mr. Deal was honored with the presidency of the class he loved so well.

## **The Monthly Business Meeting**

The Business Men's Bible Class had long since established a monthly business

ness meeting where elections were held and other business was conducted. This continues to be an important activity of the Four Square Bible Class. At this meeting reports from various committees are made, recommendations are acted upon, finances are discussed, and the annual budget is adopted. In this way all matters of secular business are excluded from the Sunday morning period of worship, fellowship and study, and adequate time is always available for presentation of the Bible lesson.

The monthly business session is also the occasion for a good meal and fellowship, and usually a special feature of entertainment is provided by one of the committees. These special features cover a wide range of interest including good music, inspirational speakers, world travel, health care, gardening, art, hobbies, and church history.

The business meeting for March 1, 1929, gives us an interesting sample of the regular fare to be expected at such meetings:

Menu: Oyster pie, Irish Stew, Celery, Apple Pie, buns and coffee.

Music: Richardson's Old Time Fiddlers.

Business: Committee reports and announcements.

The business meetings received the treasurer's report and allocated funds for various class projects. Each year a budget was prepared and a system of pledges installed. The 1940-41 budget was \$2,000.00, and expenditures included secretary's salary, Ruston Orphanage, orchestra expense, Boy Scouts, supplies, and other general expenses. The executive secretary was responsible for administering this financial program as ordered by the class.

### **A Place to Meet**

From 1918 to 1921 the Wright Class later called the Business Men's Bible Class met in various rooms of the First Methodist Church. After Dean Smith began to teach the class in the late fall of 1920, attendance increased so rapidly that the church auditorium was required for a meeting place. At the same time other classes were being organized in the church, and additional space was sought. Dean Smith and others suggested that the Business Men's Bible Class should be open to all men regardless of their church affiliation, and perhaps a location outside the confines of the church building would be conducive to this purpose. In the brief history prepared by H. D. Poole in 1946 he states that the first meeting place of the Business Men's Bible Class after leaving the Church building was the Civil Court room of the Caddo Parish Court House. It occupied this meeting place only a short while. A group of influential Shreveport citizens in the class then made arrangements for the use of City Hall on the corner of Milam and Louisiana Streets not far from the church. So in 1921 the class moved to its new location and began meeting in the Council Chamber of City Hall.

Mr. H. H. Bain, one of the charter members of the class, wrote a brief history of the class for publication in the "Four Square Herald" of March 1, 1927. He states that, "In 1921 the class was moved to the Council Chamber of the City



Hall. Although the wonderful, inspirational lectures of Dean R. E. Smith had been attracting men to the class by scores, few of us had any idea that the big auditorium above would soon be required to accommodate the crowds. Only a few months passed before it became necessary to make the move".

### **The Famous City Hall**

The City Hall and the Four Square Bible Class were suited to each other. Men from all walks of life found their way to this central place to pause for fellowship near the entrance before boarding the ancient elevator for the trip to the upstairs auditorium.

Many of the photographs of the class made by Mr. B. E. Grabill were posed on the entrance steps of this historic place. In his letter of resignation Dean Smith refers fondly to the "Ole City Hall" that sheltered the class for almost forty years and where his own prophetic voice resounded within its crumbling walls.

The inexorable march of time marked the old City Hall for decay and eventual destruction, and it became necessary for the class to seek new quarters. "This Old House" had been a happy home for the Four Square Bible Class during its glory years, and it was with much sadness that the officers packed up their equipment and moved to temporary quarters in the J & S Music Store on Milam Street. Later in 1960 the class moved to 514 Common Street and located in a store building purchased by the church for its expanding program and plant facilities. As this building was demolished in the expansion plans of the church, the Four Square Class then moved to the Y.W.C.A. Building on Travis Street, there to await the preparation of its new quarters in the expanded facilities of the church.

Under the able leadership of Dr. D. L. Dykes the First Methodist Church had embarked upon an extensive building program that included new structures on each side of the church entrance facing Common Street. Much of the real estate of this building expansion was donated by Mr. H. H. Bain, a prominent official in the church and one of the founders and patrons of the Four Square Bible Class. The great assembly hall of the north wing bears the name of this honored family.

In 1961 when the class was invited to return to the original home it is significant that it eventually moved into Bain Hall. If we might be permitted to stretch a metaphor somewhat, after forty years of "wilderness wandering" the Israelites now find their new and permanent home in Canaan.

### **Social Service and Outreach**

One of the purposes written into the Four Square Class constitution was "to foster charitable and benevolent enterprises". This purpose is fulfilled each year in many service projects and answers to calls for help. During the Advent Season a special gift box is placed in a prominent place to receive funds to help needy families. The requests for help are received and answered before Christmas Day. There is in the files one such request from a gentleman who was in real straits in



December 1931. It reads as follows: "I would like to be on the list if Four Square is going to give anything this Christmas. Just anything would be appreciated. But if I could get these, gas, lights, and water bills paid. It would be of great help. I got ready to come to Sunday School this morning but I had a job to do. My wife's sister, husband and two children came in on me Wednesday night. Got caught in the rain and high water. Piled up here on me. Just cleaned up what little I had, and we in the condition we're in. They left this P.M. Hoping you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Four Squareman, ————— ". No doubt help was forthcoming!

In 1925 the annual report listed clothing and food for the needy and help for drug addicts.

During the depression years, 1929-35 the class was confronted with many emergency calls from the community at large and from some of its own members. On Dec. 22, 1929, this meaningful notice appeared in the Four Square Bulletin: "Due to consolidation of several firms in Shreveport several of our members are out of employment, therefore if you know of a place for a shipping clerk or bookkeeper, please get in touch with the secretary".

As early as 1926 the Four Square Class was sponsoring a Boy Scout troop (No. 26) and providing a scoutmaster and a hut. Frank Brown was chairman of the first Scout Committee, and records show that scoutmasters were in short supply. Among the early leaders of the troop were L. K. Barney, Charles Petty, Nat Brandt, and Vernon McFarland. Members of Troop 26 were listed in a report made by the scoutmaster February 29, 1932. A few of these names are well remembered: Lamar Bain, Jack Dilworth, Jimmie Hammett, Sam Peters, Gordon Van Hoose, Jack Wilkerson, Harold Gammill, Arthur Ray Gammill, Jack Jordan, Thomas Burbank.

The Methodist Orphanage at Ruston, Louisiana is a support project continued for many years by the class. The city and parish jails and the Pines Sanitarium received visits and radio broadcasts from the class.

The records of the business meetings of the class reveal many calls and many financial contributions to individuals and to the various agencies of the community including the R. E. Smith Building on the Centenary College campus and a C. H. Rollins Ministerial Scholarship fund in honor of the beloved teacher who succeeded Dean Smith.

Contributions were made to the Shreveport Joy Fund, the "Buddy Camp", the Salvation Army and many other charitable causes. The generous response of the class members to all good causes is an indication of Christian stewardship and a Biblical understanding of one's relationship to the Kingdom of God.

### **Class Publications**

The Four Square Class has issued various news sheets and promotional journals in addition to the regular weekly bulletin with its Four Square Emblem and motto "The Friendliest Class". The first editor of this bulletin in 1923-24 was Harry W. "Bishop" Brown, the first executive secretary of the class.

In 1927 Mr. Tom Burbank, the executive secretary, began publishing the Four Square Herald, a four to eight page monthly newspaper. It carried a special emblem with an intertwining "four" and "S" designed by J. P. Dixon, one of the associate editors. Other contributors listed were P. N. Browne, D. A. Corrie, A. S. Wyman and Dr. C. E. Green. Among the ads appearing in one of the first issues was that of Hutchinson Brothers, picturing a "New Orthophonic Victrola," and of Begbie Florist.

During this same period First Methodist Church published "The Methodist Messenger" which carried news of Four Square and other classes.

Another monthly bulletin called "The Go-Getter" was in evidence while Glenn Flournoy was president in 1924. It was short lived.

Only the regular weekly Four Square Bulletin has survived, and much credit is due to the various secretaries and especially to Mrs. Gertrude Hile who was both editor and archivist for the class.

The weekly bulletin has always carried many interesting items including special comments from Dean Smith, not only dealing with the Biblical lesson material but with his perceptive notations on current events. His "Signs-O-The Times" and his "Dear Elmer" were eagerly read each Sunday. Many of these choice sayings of the Dean are recorded in a later chapter. We are indebted to Mrs. Gertrude Hile and Mr. Percy N. Browne for the back files of these writings, and currently there is a repeat of the Dean's earlier writings in the Four Square Bulletin each week. The Bulletin is mailed to those members who missed the Sunday Class session and also to out of town members who enjoy the news and progress of the class.





**4 SQUARE**  
**BIBLE CLASS**  
 DEAN SMITH, Lecturing  
 LYNN'S BUSINESS COLLEGE  
 Reporting  
 FINE MUSIC BY LARGE  
 ORCHESTRA  
 YOU ARE ALWAYS  
 WELCOME



Class Meeting in the Old Shreveport City Hall showing Dean Smith in a typical lecture pose and the young women stenographers taking down the lecture. Note the KRMD microphone. The orchestra is on platform back of speaker.



# CHAPTER X

## THE GLORY YEARS

### The First Decade

The decade of the 1920's saw the greatest growth of the class. As noted earlier, the leaders of the class brought a worldly wisdom of the business community to the affairs of the class. The first constitution provided a military-like organization of squads and captains who were responsible for attendance. The rapid growth during this period can be attributed to several factors: promotion and advertising, personal evangelism, contests, special days, visiting delegations, and continuous communication with all members. The class bulletin was mailed each week to all absentee members.

In 1923 (the year of the new name) the class membership reached 400, and the average attendance was 170. On December 9 of that year the attendance reached 353. In 1924 the membership reached 728.

The "big day", June 22, 1924, designated as Home Coming Day, broke all records to that date with an attendance of 1026. Two days later a large display ad in the Shreveport Journal expressed appreciation to that paper for a special article featuring the class and to Mr. B. E. Grabill for his services as photographer. The ad in the form of a resolution was signed by Dean Smith, Glenn Flournoy and Jas. S. Reily.

On this record day the orchestra rendered special music, the class Glee Club sang, Bishop Sam Hay was introduced, and there was a joke telling contest between Dr. George Sexton and Dr. John L. Scales.

The occasion of this "home-coming" was the return of Dean Smith after being away several Sundays for speaking engagements.

On the occasion of the second anniversary of the Four Square Bible Class March 30, 1925, another huge attendance of 1253 went into the records. Delegations registering their attendance were from "Glenn Morrow", Grand Cane Thompson Class of Central Christian Church, Centenary football team, and Men's Classes from Kings Highway Christian Church, Mangum Memorial Methodist Church and the Greek Community.

On this same day in the afternoon seventy-five class members accompanied Dean Smith to Greenwood, where he addressed a large gathering of men, where the Glee Club sang, and where H. H. Bain and E. J. "Grits" Davis spoke.

### A Day to Remember

On Jan. 1, 1926, another record attendance of 1632 was noted, surpassing that of Home Coming Day in 1924. On this day the speaker was J. F. Holder, vice president of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, and a large full page ad

appearing in Saturday's newspaper declared Railroad Men's Day for that Sunday. Another ad appearing earlier and printed in red announced to Shreveport citizens to watch for a message from Mars via "Aeroplane!" The message did arrive by air and dramatically announced Railroad Men's Day at Four Square Bible Class.

The committees had been hard at work preparing for this day, and many outside groups were invited and did attend, including delegations from Mansfield, the Barbers' Union, the Police and Fire Departments, the American Legion and the Men's Bible Class of the Central Christian Church. Special music was provided by the orchestra, the glee club, and the Shrine Chanters, and Dean Smith's lesson topic for that day was "The Travel Tour of Jesus," based on the first chapter of Mark's Gospel.

The attendance committee at that time was E. A. Reily, J. I. Brown, A. S. Wyman, and L. H. Mathis. Advertising was done by Dave Corrie, J. K. Theo, and J. P. Dixon.

Perhaps the high point in the history of the Four Square Bible Class was the year 1926 when the class made possible a trip to the Holy Land for its beloved teacher, Dean R. E. Smith. This project captured the imagination of all the members, and the funds were soon forthcoming. Much publicity was given to the project before and after the trip. Needless to say, it was a high point in the life of Dean Smith and greatly enriched his teaching at Centenary College and the Four Square Class. As a result of this pilgrimage to Palestine, the Dean wrote his famous book, "**Old Lands - Ever New**" a title suggested by Dr. George Sexton, president of the college. Dr. Willis P. Butler stated that the Four Square Class profited more from this trip than did the Dean himself!

### **The Four Square Orchestra**

The orchestra was one of the special attractions of the Four Square Bible Class for many years. It was first organized by Mr. Archibald Fowler, choir director of the First Methodist Church. Prior to 1920 it performed each Sunday Morning for the assembled adult classes in the sanctuary of the church. A number of the orchestra members were also members of the Four Square Bible Class, and when this class moved to the auditorium of the old City Hall, the orchestra came with the class and played gloriously on the opening Sunday.

Mrs. Victor Larmoyeux, a member of the orchestra from its beginning provided some interesting information about its work. It was composed of excellent musicians some of whom played with the Shrine orchestra. At first there were about eighteen persons in the orchestra when it performed for the Sunday School assembly in the church auditorium, and each member was paid \$15.00 per month. At City Hall the orchestra would play various numbers of classical and semi-classical music before the lesson was presented and would accompany the lively singing of the class under the direction of Dave Corrie. At the annual banquet each year the orchestra was a major feature.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the continued success of the orchestra and









other musical features introduced from time to time was the able work of the chairman of the music committee and also a member of the orchestra, John S. Welsh. Much credit must go to George O. Baird, Sr., manager of the orchestra in its early years.

The class had a quartet and glee club that provided musical entertainment for various class events. The Shrine Orchestra and Chanters appeared on the program from time to time as did the entire El Karuba Shrine Band with Frank Fuhrer, Director. One of the members of the class, Mr. George O. Baird, Sr., himself a musician, composed a Four Square March which was arranged for the orchestra by Mr. Fuhrer. On February 12, 1933, Ladies Day, the Mendelsohn Choral Club under the direction of Mrs. E. Weldon Jones sang for the class.

The printed program for the annual banquet in 1928 listed the orchestra personnel as follows: First Violin: Miss Lillian Ponder, Miss Celina Bizet, Mr. Victor Larmoyeux, Mr. George Whitehouse; Second violin, Miss Lillian McDowell, Miss Willie McLemore; Viola, Mrs. J. A. Bond (later to be Mrs. Victor Larmoyeux); Bass, Mr. W. J. Leonard; Flute, Mr. M. S. Talbot; First Clarinet, Mr. Arthur Jean; Second Clarinet, Mr. F. R. Core; First trumpet, Mr. R. W. Phelps; Second trumpet, Mr. J. S. Welsh; Trombone, Mr. W. C. Deal; Accompanist, Mrs. Archibald Fowler, and Conductor, Mr. Archibald Fowler.

Later the orchestra was reduced in size to four pieces, and Victor Larmoyeux became the conductor and continued until it was disabanded.

The pianist, both for the orchestra and for the song services were important members of the musical team. At first Mrs. Fowler was the accompanist. She was followed by Mrs. E. Weldon Jones. Bill Davis was an early pianist and he was followed by Mrs. Nena Wideman.

After the orchestra disbanded, music continued to be an important element in the Sunday morning program. The pianist usually presented a special number during the offering and accompanied the song leader as he coaxed and cajoled the men to lift their voices in lyrical praise.

Dave Corrie is the name so often remembered in this capacity. He had natural leadership ability, was a good musician and an excellent master of ceremonies. In 1927 he was made president of the class, and Harry Deal proved to be a good assistant song leader. When Dave Corrie finished his term as class president in 1928, he was presented with a special Four Square ring as a measure of affection and appreciation for his unique talents and dedicated service. With the song service at an end the leader then introduced the class president with some choice and fun-filled words, and he in turn introduced guests, made announcements and called for the offering. The singing tradition of the Four Square Bible Class continues through the services of Mrs. Ruth Macheca at the piano and Melvin Regan, Carroll Berry and Frank Trant as directors.

### **The Annual Banquet**

The Four Square Bible Class soon began to mark its history with an annual celebration and banquet featured in March. This annual banquet, recalls the



naming of the class and the creation of its constitution in March and April of the year 1923. This is not the actual founding date of the class itself which grew out of an original group of business men meeting in 1918 as the Wright Class as earlier noted in our story. But March, 1923, is regarded as the Exodus date, when a new Moses, Dean R. E. Smith led them into the Promised Land.

The Annual Banquet open to all members, spouses and invited guests developed into a highly significant event, and records show that outstanding speakers were recruited from throughout the nation on these occasions. The meeting usually took place in the Washington-Youree Hotel Ballroom; the ladies were present; and the men were on their best behavior. Among the speakers appearing on the program of this annual event were Dr. E. K. Means, First Methodist Church, Jackson, Miss.; Bishop Hoyt M. Dobbs; Bishop A. Frank Smith; Dr. Paul Quillian; Judge Hugh A. Locke, Birmingham, Alabama; Judge W. L. Estes; and Hon. J. B. Aswell.

The fifth annual banquet of the class March 23, 1928, provides us with a glimpse of the significance of the occasion and the quality of the program. Dave Corrie was president and gave the welcome address. The full orchestra of sixteen persons provided music; Mrs. H. C. McKean rendered a solo "To a Rose" by Mac Fadyen; Col. G. W. Hardy introduced the main speaker, Judge Hugh A. Locke, and Dean Smith gave the response. Dr. Robt. E. Goodrich gave the invocation, and Dr. W. W. Holmes gave the benediction. The menu consisted of fruit salad in half grapefruit, celery and olives, cream chicken and mushroom patties, candied yams, stuffed bell peppers, special Four Square Ice Cream, petit fours and demi-tasse. The Washington Hotel was the place of meeting, a plush center of civic and social life for the Shreveport community.

These annual banquets made a great contribution to the life of the Four Square Bible Class and represent the period of burgeoning growth when the class was making great impact on Shreveport and the entire Arkansas-Louisiana-Texas area.

In later years the annual banquet was discontinued, and in its place the class introduced the Christmas Open House held in the church parlors. This provided an informal occasion for the gathering of Four Square members, their families, former members, and the church staff.

### **Weekly Luncheon Club**

Soon after its beginning men, of the Four Square Class organized a Four Square Luncheon Club which met each Thursday and featured good food, fellowship, and entertainment. Prominent speakers appeared on the program including such names as Dr. Clovis Chappel, T. W. Holloman, Hon. E. H. Randolph, Dr. R. E. Goodrich, delegates to the National Democratic Convention, J. M. Barnette, E. D. Harbin, the Methodist Recreation Expert, Col. Dan Spurlock, and Mayor L. E. Thomas. There was some interest in forming other clubs and eventually a national organization, but this project did not materialize. The Four Square Luncheon Club



did attract many down town business men, and the outstanding speakers made the programs of civic value. On some occasions the radio station would broadcast the program. Perhaps one reason for the demise of this project was the inauguration of a midweek luncheon at the YMCA for all Bible Class teachers to hear a lecture pertaining to the next Sunday's lesson. Dean Smith was one of the regular attractions, and this interdenominational project continued for many years.

### **The Annual Barbeque**

The great enthusiasm of the men of the Four Square Class and their grandiose goals for the future engendered a close fellowship among them expressed in various ways. The annual barbeque developed as one of these expressions and soon became a much heralded event. Fun, food and fellowship were the order of the day. Families and friends were included. Committees worked hard well in advance, and publicity was designed to arouse widespread interest. The event was scheduled in late spring or summer and good weather prevailed in most instances. Not only was the barbeque a happy expression of Four Square fellowship, but it was also a means of attracting community-wide attention to the work of the class and many new members were enrolled as a result.

A. G. Hammett, a Caddo Parish planter of note and a member of the class, provided the facilities for the barbeque at the Bagley Plantation south of Shreveport near Pleasureville.

As an illustration of the success of this annual recreation event on July 18, 1925, there were 3,500 men, women and children present for the barbeque! A baseball game provided much of the fun, and pitching and catching were highlighted by Dr. Robert E. Goodrich, Pastor of the First Methodist Church, and Dr. Albert Lutz, Presiding Elder of the Shreveport District of the Methodist Church. No record is available as to the number of home runs resulting from this clerical battery. To feed this mammoth crowd the committee provided 2,000 pounds of beef and mutton. The Methodist movement has always been associated with good food and fellowship, and Methodist preachers are notoriously fond of fried chicken and barbequed ribs. Perhaps Dean Smith looked out over the crowd that day and recalled that on one occasion Jesus hosted and fed five thousand in a seated picnic near the sea of Galilee!

This good custom dating back to the first years of Four Square history has been carried forward by another faithful member in the person of Ray Oden, who graciously provides the barbeque and the hospitality of his Myrtle Hill Plantation. Ray is one of the oldest members of the class and he and Mrs. Oden are faithful in their attendance and generous supporters of all class projects. Long may they live, and long may the Four Square annual barbeque prevail!

### **Special Days**

In studying the early records of the "glory years" of the Four Square Bible Class we recognize that the huge attendance registered on certain Sundays was

he result of promotion of Special Days and the presence of large numbers of visitors. The actual membership of the class seldom reached 1000. We have already mentioned the record attendance of 1632 on Railroad Men's Day, January 1, 1926. (The football "bowl" games had not yet arrived!) These special days were widely publicized and thoroughly promoted and became regular ongoing features. They not only provided the occasion for a large attendance, they also served to reach out to prospective members. These special days were usually headlined by the newspapers, and a follow-up story appeared on Monday. In addition to Dean Smith's Bible lecture a representative from the visiting delegation usually provided an interesting element to the program. Some of the special days heralded by the Four Square Bible Class during these years are worthy of mention:

Oil and Gas Men's Day. (Shreveport had become the mecca for the new oil industry).

Railroad Men's Day. (The railroads were a major factor in national economic growth in the nineteen twenties and thirties). The size and excitement of the crowd on this special day indicates the role the railroads played in the two decades from 1920-1940. Alas, times did change! For that day in 1926 the vice-president of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, J. F. Holden, was the speaker. On the same day in 1929 the president of the Cotton Belt Railroad, Daniel Upthegrove, was the speaker, at a time when the stock market had crashed and the great depression was at hand. Some of his remarks show us how little we understand what is really happening around us. In part he said:

"The recent collapse of the stock market is going to do good. People will turn from speculation to productive investments as a result!"

Home Coming Day by honoring the teacher on his return from teaching and preaching engagements and on his return from the Holy Land.

Telephone and Telegraph Men's Day. (Before radio and television dominated the scene).

Public Officials Day. (Office holders, candidates, and all politicians anxious to be seen and heard).

Ladies' Day. (One of the most popular days. Was this the Trojan Horse that let the ladies in?)

Tom Mix Day. (A visit from the famous cowboy of the silent movies in 1934).

National Defense Day.

Caddo Parish Day. (Sheriff Tom Hughes was an active member).

City Employees Day.

Automobile Day.

High School Day.

Masonic Day.

Hardware Men's Day.

Evangelistic Day.

Doctors and Nurses Day. On this day arrangements had been made for a line of street cars (electric on tracks) to park at Charity Hospital at Texas and Murphy Streets. They were filled with nurses and doctors and proceeded to City



Hall where they were joined by others of the same profession. (We have no records of what happened that day in Charity Hospital while the staff attended Sunday School!) Dr. E. L. Sanderson, head of the Charity Hospital, was president of the Four Square Class at that time.

These special days were exciting and dramatic events. Large crowds in the Church usually arouse in the teacher or preacher his best effort, whether it be John Wesley preaching out-of-doors to the English miners or Billy Graham proclaiming the gospel in the Notre Dame football stadium. The large crowds on special days gave excellent publicity to the Four Square Bible Class and helped to build up the permanent membership.

### **Passion Play Sponsored by Four Square**

Among the special days and events scheduled by the Four Square Class we need to mention the original Passion Play from Freiburg, Germany, sponsored by the class in February, 1930, for five days in the Memorial Auditorium. The famous Adolf Fassnacht played the part of Christ. The large brochure containing the program featured the class officers, many advertisements of local firms, and a brief history of the class by Tom Burbank, executive secretary. The Passion Play committee responsible for bringing this event to Shreveport was composed of John S. Welch, David Corrie, John I. Brown, James S. Reily, A. G. Flournoy and William F. Johnson.

### **Some Famous Names**

During its glory years of the 1920's the Four Square Bible Class attracted many famous personages from the political circles of the city, parish, state, and nation. Because of its interdenominational character, its city hall base of operation, and its huge attendance, political office holders and those who aspired to such offices found the class a good place to be seen and heard. Furthermore, they responded genuinely to the message of the great Bible teacher and found a double blessing in being present as often as duty permitted.

Congressman Overton Brooks was a faithful member until his death. On one occasion he wrote an article for the Four Square Bible Class entitled "Why I Attend the Four Square Bible Class." In part he said:

"All men, and particularly a man in public life, need the quietude and relaxation of a place of worship, a place of everlasting inspiration—The Four Square Bible Class is such a place. Its entire background, membership and program bear the definite imprint of the personality of Dean R. E. Smith, our class teacher. This sets the class apart from any other class and gives its entire membership a fellowship and an earnestness not found in other classes.

"When, therefore, I finish a hard week's work, I find relaxation, enjoyment, inspiration and religious satisfaction in my attendance at the Four Square. I find a challenge in the sparkling sermons of Dean Smith and a profound sense of reward



for an hour well spent in the religious atmosphere. That is why I seek every opportunity I have to come to the Four Square Bible Class."

Dr. Willis P. Butler has given us some interesting stories about the class in its very beginning. As Parish Coroner his office was in the City Hall, and each Sunday morning he stood outside the entrance and invited his many friends to join the class. Huey Long was one of those and was introduced to the class by Dr. Butler. He states that in a few weeks Long was up front on the platform with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, exhorting the congregation to elect his friend Dave Corrie as president of Four Square Bible Class. Huey Long continued as a member of the class and many of his Biblical quotations in his various political campaigns were learned from the lectures of Dean Smith.

The Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, Pastor of the Kings Highway Christian Church, as a participant in the activities of the Four Square Class, and on one occasion at a business meeting to arouse interest in an attendance campaign he and Huey Long spoke at length. This no doubt was the beginning of a lasting political friendship between the two. A tape recording of these two talks would be of great historic value, but this little invention, so notoriously useful at the Washington White House in the 1970's, was not available at the time.

On the occasion of the death of Huey Long in 1934 Dean Smith wrote a classic tribute to him in the September 22 Bulletin:

"Any man who before 40 years of age can stand in the most exclusive deliberative body of the world and cause his voice to be echoed around the globe is no ordinary man. No man among us has in so brief a time made his name a household word throughout the nation and even in foreign lands.

"The common people flocked to him, followed him, loved him. His was a voice crying in the wilderness - and that wilderness became a nation's sounding board. Naturally, that voice aroused opposition as well as rallying a following that kings might covet. If his foes would disprove his philosophy let them correct the economic conditions that made some such plan as Senator Long's inevitable. Unless and until there is a more equitable distribution of the necessities and comforts of life, this man's spirit will not sleep . . . Much of the Bible that he later quoted so effectively he learned at Four Square. He was regular in attendance and liberal in support of the class. His name should be enrolled on Four Square's list of honored dead".

City and Parish officials were prominent in the Four Square membership. the list of class presidents reveals to us the leading citizens who have contributed to the history of this great class.

The Four Square Bible Class in its long and illustrious history has included in its membership men (and women) from all walks of life and from all professions and businesses, rich and poor, famous and little known, Catholics and Protestants, young and old, and all these differences have been united in the common purpose of Bible Study and a quest for the Kingdom of God. A list of the past presidents of the class, will speak for itself and perhaps we should introduce it with words from the Book of Hebrews where the author speaks of heroes of the faith: "And what

shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of - ": Axel Swanson, a. Glen Flournoy, H. H. Bain, Tom Hodges, David A. Corrie, Percy N. Browne, John S. Welsh, Dr. A. A. Garrison, Dr. E. L. Sanderson, J. S. Reily, W. H. Robinson, Frank Brown, Dr. J. M. Gorton, Arthur S. Wyman, W. W. Teekel, C. O. Holland, Roscoe H. White, Glenn Walker, Jr., Tom H. Abney, W. C. Yancey, J. Drev Moreland, Guy H. Owen, Harry A. Deal, Henry I. Winegeart, Rea J. Fox, W. D. Smith, J. H. Bosley, Lon H. Abney, John T. Carpenter, Hollace Bain, Jr., W. W. Jackson, Bart Hile, Frank Trant, Charles Wakeland, Gordon Carr, Bill Bridges, Arch Bewley, Wincie Daniel, Garner Miller, H. D. Butler, B. W. Blanpied, Melvin Regan, B. B. Rhodes, W. D. Cailleff, George O. Baird, Jr., Malcolm Dutton, Wayne Bateman, E. E. Bower, Raymond Godfrey, W. L. Creger, Grady C. Golden, George Gibson, Jr., Col. Raymond Markham, Carroll Berry, Gordon Hoyer.

# CHAPTER XI

## WORLDLY WISDOM FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES

### Newspaper Coverage

At a time when ordinary sermons, revivals, and other church happenings were regarded as newsworthy, the Four Square Bible Class found the two local newspapers helpful allies in spreading its message. Furthermore, outstanding citizens of Shreveport were involved in the class enterprises, and prominent national speakers appeared on the program from time to time, giving big names to the news media.

The special days, the visiting delegations, the annual banquets and barbeques were noteworthy events thoroughly covered by the newspapers. The press gave good coverage to forthcoming events and then followed with an interesting account of what happened on the day. As an example of the coverage one Sunday in 1924 was reported as follows with the headline; "615 attend Four Square Meeting. Led by the Rev. H. L. Johns a large delegation from the Methodist Church of Cedar Grove were guests of the class, and members of the Bain-Beaird Welding and Machine Company and H. H. Bain Sheet Metal Workers were guests also. Mr. Bain introduced the guests individually and concluded by presenting Howard Rogers and H. H. Peters who sang a duet, accompanied by McCann's orchestra. An interesting talk was made by Clarence D. Boyd, field representative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, prior to Dean Smith's lecture". The newspaper article then continued with a summary of the lesson-lecture "Nicodemus".

Some of the headlines in both the **Shreveport Times** and the **Shreveport Journal** newspapers during the nineteen-twenties read as follows:

Smith Lauds City of Shreveport; Dean R. E. Smith Talks Politics;  
Gambling Evil is Discussed; Value of Four Square Class, accompanied by a two column picture of A. Glenn Flournoy, president of the class;  
Four Square Class Favors Chapel in Court House;  
Four Square Radio Program; Four Square Class Invites Merchants;  
Eight Hundred hear Dean Smith Sunday; Paul's Arrest Dean's Theme;  
Carpenters' Day at Four Square; Major Speaker at Four Square;  
Four Square Will Organize Another Scout Troop;  
Four Square Hears Sexton; Smith Flays Machine Age;  
Four Square to Honor Dead; Five Hundred Attend Fete of Four Square;  
Tribute Paid to Sheriff Hughes;  
Minden Class will be Guest of Four Square;  
Browne is chosen Four Square Head; Four Square Class Gives Ring to Retiring Head;  
Perhaps this headline is the best: (7-18-25): THIRTY FIVE HUNDRED ATTEND FOUR SQUARE PICNIC.



All of this press coverage in the nineteen-twenties and thirties points up the fact that the Four Square Bible Class was regarded as a unique Shreveport institution with a wide influence throughout the Ark-La-Tex area. The teacher of the class, Dean R. E. Smith, had become a famous personality, and his lectures were heard and read by thousands many of whom were not in the membership of the churches. The reporters who covered political events emanating from City Hall during the week days found no inconsistency in covering religious services on Sunday, originating from this secular center of the city. No one objected to the use of public facilities for religious purposes, and the doctrine of separation of church and state was in this instance breached. Religion has not always been a unifying force in Shreveport, for on one occasion a committee of citizens decided to frame and hang in the foyer of the Parish Court House a copy of the Biblical Ten Commandments as an appropriate symbol of the process of law. A sharp Protestant eye discovered that a Roman Catholic version of the Commandments was used in the framed document, and the resulting furor among the churches caused the officials to take it down and relegate it to the basement discards. Perhaps the Parish officials could try again using a more relevant scripture. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

### Advertising

The officers of the Four Square Bible Class were fully aware of the power of advertising. Newspaper ads were purchased and financed by members of the class who promoted their own business enterprises along with the affairs of the class.

To arouse interest in the special days full page newspaper ads were often published. In 1926 on the occasion of Railroad Men's Day such an ad appeared in the **Shreveport Journal** announcing in large block letters: WANTED! 1500 Men in City Hall by Four Square Bible Class to observe Railroad Men's Day. Smaller boxes in the ad proclaimed the business enterprises of auto repairing, real estate, dry goods, banking, coffee, dry cleaning, and printing. Special cards and flyers were printed and distributed by class members in their businesses, on the streets, in the street cars, and in the hotels. The class secretary released pictures and news items and wrote letters to various organizations in the community. To advertise Railroad Men's Day an "Aeroplane" was engaged to fly over the city with a banner proclaiming "a message from Mars" about Four Square. While the plane flew over the city that Saturday afternoon, the class had a downtown parade rallying a crowd for Sunday morning.

Another full page ad prior to Dean Smith's voyage to the Holy Land appeared June 6, 1926, and included were items from Selber Bros: Mallory Hats, \$7; new cravats; and two pants suits, \$35 and \$40. These suits were described as having "broad shoulders, wide lapels, narrow hips and a slight intake at the waist. Both single and double breasted are correct."

One newspaper ad stated: "Attend the Four Square Bible Class Sunday - Red Blooded - Real Men," accompanied by a picture of the class assembled outside City Hall. Some of the men pictured appeared to need more blood!

The Strand Theatre, Shreveport's grand emporium of entertainment, produced a short movie of the Four Square Bible Class, and in its ad for Feb. 28, 1927, announced it as an "extra" after the showing of the feature film entitled "Blonde or Brunette" starring Adolph Menjou.

In 1928 outdoor billboards advertising the Four Square Bible Class were donated by E. I. Davis and J. W. Peyton. One sign was erected "just across the bayou at the entrance to Broadmoor," and the Southwestern Gas and Electric Co. provided the "power to operate this board by night free of charge". The big board proclaimed: Welcome Visitors - The Four Square Bible Class - A Friendly Men's Class of Over 1000 Members - In a Friendly City - Dean R. E. Smith Teacher - Four Square Orchestra - At City Hall.

Since the class was employing a part time executive secretary shortly after its organization, this officer carried on extensive correspondence, wrote news articles, and prepared advertising lay-outs. In 1928 a **Shreveport Journal** article gave the following headline article: Letters mailed by Bible Class to Many Places. In order to acquaint prospective Shreveport visitors from Arkansas, East Texas, and Louisiana towns with the Four Square Bible Class, letters are being mailed to Chambers of Commerce and Superintendents of Sunday Schools in this territory in addition to the regular Sunday morning radio broadcasts over KSBA, which bring favorable publicity for the class.

The class publicity committee at this time is worthy of note and included Percy N. Browne, A. M. Pyburn, Joe P. Dixon, Harold De Generes. F. E. Wilkerson, J. L. White, J. S. Barfield and W. D. Castle.

After the class began its program of radio broadcasting, this new communication medium brought news of the class to communities within a radius of one hundred miles. Visitors frequently reported hearing the broadcasts on a regular basis before attending the church service.

### **Four Square Goes to the Air Waves**

When Dean Smith arrived in Shreveport in 1920, radio was not much more than a toy, but as local broadcast stations were established, the church soon adopted this new communication medium to reach larger and larger audiences. The Four Square Bible Class found the radio conducive to its own purposes, and since the class was interdenominational and located in the City Hall, radio stations were eager to get a tie-in with this popular and growing enterprise.

We have noted the pioneer efforts at radio broadcasting in Shreveport in a previous chapter, but the Four Square Bible Class entered the field in 1924 with a remote hook-up with Station WGAQ, owned and operated by the **Shreveport Times**, Henderson Iron Works, and Hotel Youree, broadcasting on a wave length of 263. Later this station became the famous KWKH with the "Hello World" greet-



ing anxiously awaited each day by thousands.

In 1928 the class was using Station KSBA as its broadcast base.

In 1930 Four Square began its long relations with Station KRMD. These broadcasts were sponsored that year by the Southern Cities Distributing Company and James S. Riley is credited with the arrangements. This station also broadcast the Friday night meetings of the class in 1937.

As early as 1926 arrangements were made by the class to place radio receiving sets in the jails and in the Pines Sanitarium, a pioneer and unique service of outreach by a religious organization.

The Four Square broadcasts over KRMD were picked up by all communities in the ARK-LA-TEX area, and some churches used the broadcast of Dean Smith's lectures in the absence of their ministers. What better Bible lessons and sermons could a rural church have than those broadcast from Shreveport City Hall in the nineteen-twenties? As these broadcasts became more popular, the class reached out to enroll radio members who listened on a regular basis and communicated with the class from time to time with pertinent comments.

The vast radio audience of the Four Square Bible Class became familiar not only with the great teacher but with the orchestra and officers of the class. Dave Corrie, the popular and personable song leader and master of ceremonies recognized the people of radio land and kept them informed step by step of the morning's procedures.

On one occasion during Dean Smith's lecture a loud explosion was heard across the street from City Hall, and Mr. Corrie quickly stepped up to the microphone to announce that all was well at Four Square and that none of the members were injured in the explosion.

The medium of radio broadcasts through the Four Square Bible Class gave Dean Smith a public exposure far beyond his class room work at Centenary College. He was able to promote and give sanction to many good causes by this means, and during the political campaigns of the late nineteen-twenties and the early thirties he used the radio to expound the cause of Prohibition and later the principle of local option. Not only were his Four Square lectures broadcast, but he was frequently invited to speak from the station studios. And so the voice of the Prophet was heard in the land far beyond the imagination of Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah!

### **A Typical Class Session**

One Sunday in the late 1920's a travelling man by the name of R. C. Forman from Jacksonville, Florida, visited Shreveport and found his way to the Four Square Bible Class. He had been a student under Dean Smith in 1902 at Meridian Male College and later at Ruskin Cave College, Ruskin, Tenn. He was eager to see and hear once again his "old" professor. Later he wrote a long and interesting letter for the Four Square records, and it describes for us what a session of the Four Square Bible Class was like in those early years. He entitled it "That Four Square Bible Class".



"I went to the city hall where they said Four Square Bible class met every Sunday morning. There were but few men about. But with cordial promptness one of them introduced himself and inquired of me, in a very friendly way, of my residence, profession, etc. Soon the men began to drift in by twos and three, and groups, the average jolly, dependable American business men.

"I asked about Professor Smith. 'Oh, Doctor Smith, he will be here now most any minute. He is never late'. He saw me at the very instant I saw him, and we rushed toward each other. 'Well, well, Forman, 'pon my soul'. The very same smile; the very same hand clasp, and I could almost vow, the very same white lawn string tie, and a replica at least of the same little sack alpaca coat, black crushed hat, glasses, et al. The smile was just as buoyant as ever. That blue, blue eye just as penetrating and direct as in the olden days.

"He introduced me to one or two and pushed me up toward the front of a hall that I saw at a glance would hold some two thousand people. We had little time for conversation, for the different officials of that large class began to pull at him in those abominable whispered interviews that always make me feel like I'm at a funeral. The stringed band or orchestra on a high stage, like the one in Ruskin Cave College, was stirring the time along with alternating classical and sacred music. Soon there was much in evidence on a small improvised lower platform in front of the stage, a tall, confident, well-dressed, red haired business man, who seemed to assume the job of ramrodding the thing to a good start in the way of 'whooping them up', making announcements, getting them to sing and engineering the collection. Roughly there were present when Prof. Smith started, somewhere between eight hundred and a thousand men and women with the men in prominence. Promptly and with business like directness and simplicity, without flare or sanctimonious pomp, Dr. Smith mounted the small lower platform which was bare of table or chair, made his speech without notes or formality, with the same crisp, clarity, short and forceful sentences as of old, spoke for twenty-five minutes by my watch, and closed. He stays in the Bible both for text and the major part of his subject matter, but at the same time makes it intensely modern and practical in its application.

"He so deftly avoided raising the question of modernism that even the most dogmatic could not have taken offense. He did it by exercising that remarkable, fine sense of stressing the positive, the constructive, the real fundamentals of life. He is still intensely interesting in that his sentences are short, his language simple, and he is still very forceful, warmly human and dramatic in delivery, clear in his thinking and logical and complete in his treatment of subject matter, which wholesomely pertains to and is concerned with life and living. You are glad you came, and you have the impulse to live a better life.

"With all, you leave him happy with yourself, delighted with your visit, in love with him, and recharged with the old and ever new ambition to climb up and on in the same constructive service of the world".

In addition to this vivid account of a visit to the Four Square Bible Class in its glory years the class archives has a number of taped programs as broadcast

over station KRMD. We hear the voice of the song leader and master of ceremonies introducing the program to the radio audience. The orchestra presents two or three numbers. Lively congregation singing interspersed with folksy remarks and personal banter follows. Some responses are heard from class members. The hymns are selected from the old revival favorites, and some members call out their requests. Reports from attendance contest leaders are made followed by enthusiastic clapping. At this point the president is called forward to preside. Visitors and new members are introduced, and cases of illness mentioned. Some special interest or appeal may be noted, and there may be an added musical number.

The offering is now gathered, and the offertory is rendered by the orchestra or pianist. The teacher is then formally presented and given an enthusiastic welcome. Before launching into the lesson, Dean Smith mentions the names of those who are ill or away on trips and sends out a general welcome to all absent members. He may engage in some witty exchange with one or two class officials or members.

In 1954 the coffee hour was introduced to foster good fellowship and involve both men and women in happy conversation. The ladies soon took charge of this popular project and provided both coffee and cookies. For some years, while her health permitted, Mrs. Ailene Wilcox was the official hostess for this important social hour each Sunday morning.

It is evident from the above descriptions that the Four Square Bible Class presents the visitor the format of a country church service, a college classroom, a social gathering, a Methodist love feast, a business meeting, an intergenerational group of people, and a community of caring Christians. These are the ingredients that make the class unique and ever appealing.

### **Advent of the Women**

Since women have played such prominent roles in the Four Square Bible Class's more recent history, it may seem strange that the class waited so long to open its membership to the ladies. Furthermore, as noted earlier, prior to 1918, there was a large Wesley Adult Bible Class composed of both men and women and from this class came the group of business men who formed the Business Men's Bible Class, which invited Dean Smith to be its teacher in the fall of 1920. Not only historically are the women related to the Four Square Class, but they were indispensable in its music program from the very beginning as members of the orchestra and pianists for the congregational singing.

Was this a period in the "Old South" when women were regarded as subservient angels confined to the affairs of home making, or were the men obsessed with the male chauvinism of Paul in his Corinthian correspondence where he declares, "Women should keep silence in the churches"? (Remember, the men had exclusive control over politics and did not allow women to vote until 1922!)



But the Women's Liberation Movement was already under way, and if not by direct assault then certainly by tactful infiltration, they began to appear at City Hall. They would not be denied permanently the privilege of hearing the great Dean Smith in the Four Square Bible Class setting.

It was reported that on one occasion a small group of ladies, determined to attend the class, were met at the door by a gracious and tactful usher who told them that it was somewhat dangerous for ladies to be in that part of the inner city on Sunday morning because of certain unsavory characters who might accost them. They were not told whether any of these unsavory characters were in attendance at the Four Square Bible Class!

The women of the church soon devised a scheme to circumvent the closed door policy of the Four Square Class. Like all groups of women seeking equal status and equal opportunities with men, they took matters into their own hands and organized a Tuesday afternoon Bible Class as an adjunct to Four Square. Mrs. H. H. Bain was elected president of the group, and on December 12, 1924, she issued this statement in the First Methodist Church Messenger:

"We do want you, wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of Four Square Bible Class. . . . If we could get 800 women to hear Dr. Smith for one hour every week there would be 800 better homes in Shreveport, 800 better wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. Aren't your husbands better husbands since the Four Square Bible Class was organized?" Such an improvement in their husbands' conduct convinced the women that Four Square must be a good thing!

### **Inevitable Circumstances**

Inevitable circumstances eventually brought women into the membership of the Four Square Bible Class. They were included in all social events such as the annual banquet and the annual barbeque. One of the first special days inaugurated by the class was Ladies Day, and this event always brought a large attendance. It also opened the way for ladies to be included among the visitors each Sunday, and their presence seemed to improve the singing and added much to the decor and demeanor of the class.

We have mentioned the necessary role of the women in the important musical program of the class. We need also to point out the very helpful service of the students of Lynn's Business School, who attended to take down in short hand the lectures of Dean Smith. (This was before the advent of the tape recorder we know so much about today!) At a later date recordings were made of the Dean's lectures and are available in the class archives. A faithful and devoted member, May Collins, has continued this service to the class. These young women from the Business School transcribed and mimeographed the lectures in folio form, and these were placed on sale at ten cents each. One of the earliest of these is dated October 18, 1931. The title of the lecture was "A Tale of Two Cities" (Thessalonica and Berea). and it was transcribed by Margaret Lucky and Evelyn Chadock.

Ladies Day at Four Square September 10, 1928, was the occasion for an



unusual lecture by Dean Smith, in which he corrects St. Paul's prejudice toward women. In part he said, "If in Genesis we see woman at a disadvantage in the Garden of Eden, in the New Testament we find her the recipient of angels' visits and glorious revelations. They were first at the tomb of the risen Lord. Without aid from the noble women Paul could not have founded his churches. Despite some hard sayings of his, he finally recognizes the value of their work and calls their names in ringing testimony. In Europe Lydia and her household were the first converts, and Paul was sheltered in her house. He recalls the noble women, not a few, who stood by him when mobs were howling for his blood. In cultured Athens only two converts are named, and Damaris, a woman, is one of them. A final injunction of Timothy was, "Help the women! Capable of great sacrifice to forbear and forgive much, woman best appreciates the nature of the gospel." There were 300 women present to hear this lecture.

On Ladies Day in 1933 Mrs. R. E. Smith was the teacher of the Four Square Bible Class, and the Mendelssohn Choral Club under the direction of Mrs. E. Weldon Jones provided the music. Another prominent lady appeared as teacher in 1934 in person of Mrs. Katherine French of Centenary College.

In 1943 the presence of women in the Four Square Men's Bible Class, creating a defacto situation, was finally recognized not only as right and proper but also as a necessity. Under the presidency of W. C. Yancy and at his insistence the class voted to change the original constitution and to admit women as associate members.

As associate members the ladies would enjoy all the privileges of the class but were not eligible for elected office. So after twenty years the ladies won their battle of equal rights and privileges by the gentle methods of infiltration, willing service, and growing numbers. Defacto became de jure. In 1945 the Bulletin motto was changed from "A friendly business men's class" to "A friendly men's class with associate members" and finally to "The Friendliest Class".

Following these early developments the ladies were attending the class with their husbands in increasing numbers. Many of these outstanding women continue to be of great service to the class even after the death of their husbands. From the beginning date of 1923 the original group of business men, so young and enterprising as the early pictures reveal, gradually moved into their middle years and in the decade of the 1960's they graduated to the new estate of Senior Citizens.

Some notable examples of service on the part of the women are worthy of mention. Bart Hile, who had succeeded Tom Burbank as secretary of the class, was nominated for president in 1954 and agreed to accept the office on the condition that his wife, Gertrude, would serve as secretary during his one year in office. So for one year the constitution was breached, and a woman was made secretary. When Bart Hile's term as president was completed, he again became secretary, and Gertrude Hile continued to be editor and publisher of the Four Square Bulletin. She continued in this capacity and accumulated all the past file records, and mementos of the class from its beginning, and these have been

placed in the permanent archives of the First United Methodist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana. At the time of this writing some of the first ladies of the class are still serving in prominent positions. Mrs. Helen Davis is assistant secretary to Wayne Bateman, who succeeded Harry Deal as executive secretary. Mrs. Edith Morefield is a greeter in charge of the bulletin distribution, and Mrs. Olive Weaver is Brotherhood chairperson. A survey of the present class membership will reveal the names of many women who have helped to make the Four Square Bible class a successful and growing enterprise.

### **The Prohibition Obsession**

It is always difficult for a later generation to understand the attitudes and feelings aroused by certain political and social events at the time of their occurrence. The period from 1920 through the first half of the 1930's was a time of social and political upheaval in the United States. The 18th Amendment to the constitution prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverage was under constant attack, and the illegal traffic and criminal syndicates associated with it tore the country apart. In 1928 the presidential Democratic candidate, Al Smith, announced his plan to repeal this Amendment and aroused the prohibition forces against him. As being a Roman Catholic candidate also turned most of the conservative South against him. Mr. Hoover, a Republican, was elected. But the great depression forced him out four years later, and a new voice was heard in the land with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Soon thereafter in 1933 the 18th amendment was repealed, and "happy days were here again" according to one of its campaign songs.

Dean Smith was an implacable foe of the entire liquor establishment and attacked on every front, where it appeared, with every weapon in his arsenal: preaching, teaching, lecturing, and writing. He voted the National Prohibition ticket as part of his defense. Even after the repeal of the national law he crusaded for local option by parish, city, and ward. This was his great obsession during this period, and he saw the entire industry with all of its giant tentacles corrupting the social order and destroying the life of the individual.

Again we must try to realize the strong emotions sweeping over the country at this time and the bitter fight between the prohibition forces and the mounting financial and propaganda forces of the liquor interests. Dean Smith was swept up by these tides, but he always approached the issue with careful information and steadfast devotion to the inherent moral and spiritual values. He recognized and admitted that legal prohibition was not the ultimate solution, but his pleas was for any type of legal regulation that would protect the young, the sober, and the Christian home.

In 1932 he was asked by the Methodist Church to write a series of lessons on the prohibition issue for the Adult Student Magazine. He stated as the purpose of the course: "To investigate all parts and to be patient and fair to those who hold opposite views; to cultivate a cooperative spirit leading to a friendly effort to

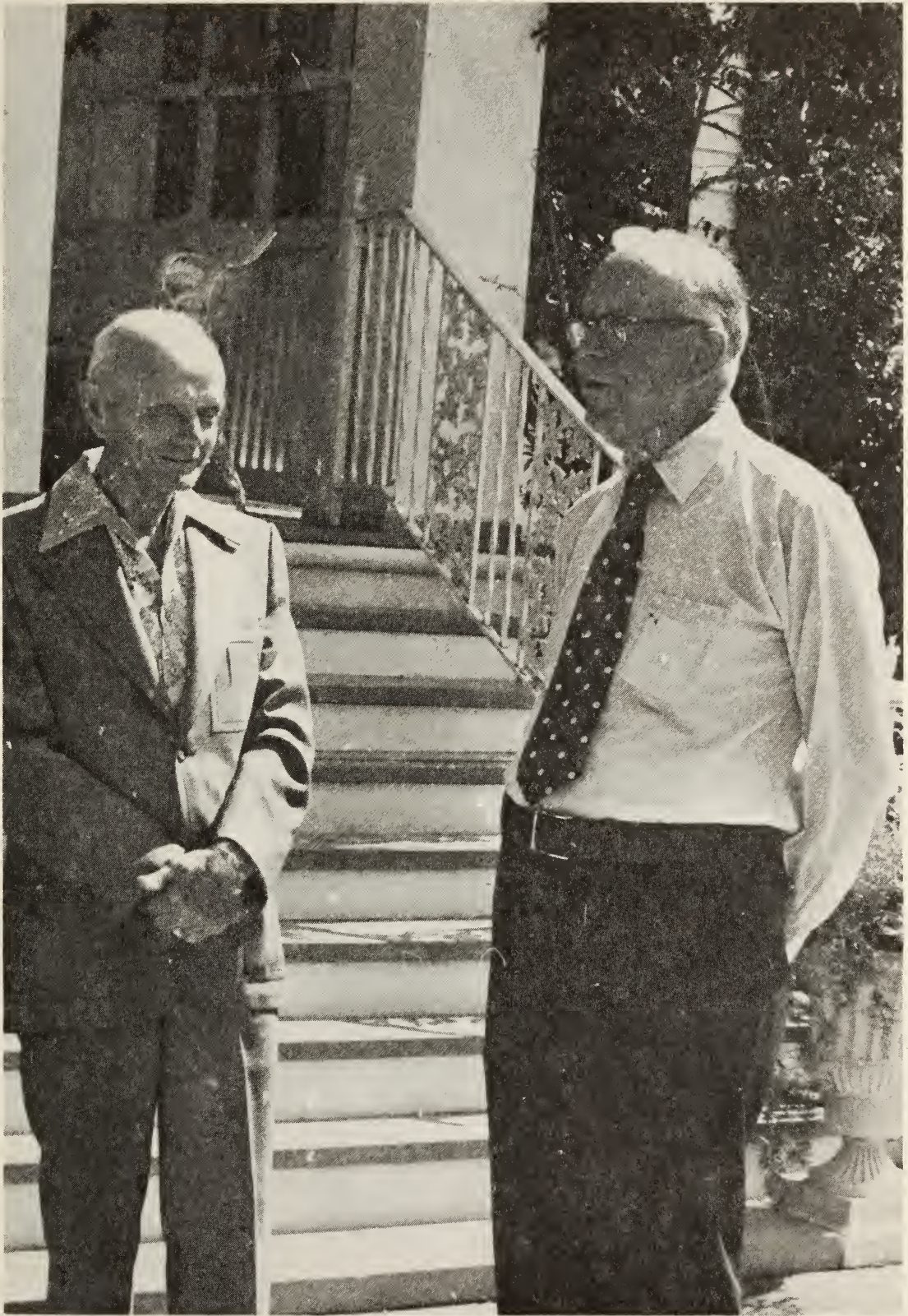
unite the whole community forces in dealing with a common social problem”.

In February of this same year he addressed an assembly of faculty members and friends of the college on a possible substitute for the 18th Amendment saying “Many good people are honestly confused and the situation is unsatisfactory.”

He did not win this battle, but his strong witness still stands and his prophecy concerning this consummate social evil is fulfilled each day in the highway deaths, the broken homes, the alcoholic derelicts, and the staggering cost related to all forms of the liquor traffic. How feeble are the voices of the church today in dealing with this evil!

Alcohol has become so much a part of the American way of life, and the industry has become so powerful in the economic and political world that our social conscience has atrophied, and the church is ineffective in its battle with this giant evil. Dean Smith may have been a voice crying in the wilderness in his obsession with prohibition, but in terms of our present situation his was indeed a voice of prophetic judgment. To indicate the magnitude to which this social evil has grown a current study by the University of California was reported in the press March 16, 1978, as follows: Of the estimated nine million alcoholics in the United States each one generates an annual cost of \$4,910.00 to our society. The annual cost of alcohol abuse breaks down in the following categories: Loss of production, 20.6 billion; auto accidents, 6.6 billion; health costs, 11.9 billion; safety and criminal justice, 2.7 billion; violent crimes, 2 billion. Can we not discern the “signs of the times”?





**Col. Raymond Markham, Four Square President 1975, and Ray Oden, host for the Annual Barbeque at Myrtle Hill Plantation.**



# **CHAPTER XII**

## **THE SETTLED YEARS**

### **To Meet Changing Times**

In the third decade of its history the Four Square Bible Class began to level off in its enrollment and attendance from the "glory" years of the nineteen twenties. Many of the great leaders of the class had passed on, and they were not easily replaced. As previously stated, other adult classes were being organized, and the flow of visitors from other churches was no longer in evidence. The In Memoriam bulletin December 26, 1943, lists over one hundred fifty prominent members who had died in the first ten years of the class's history. We list only a few of these well remembered names: J. H. Adger, J. E. Hughes, L. H. Mathis, C. W. Hardy, D. B. Stutsman, J. C. Shepherd, Dr. T. L. Ragan, J. E. Dolan, J. C. Allen, A. B. King, S. C. Fullilove, L. P. Butler, Sr., J. M. Robinson, F. R. Hicks, W. E. Connell, Abel Bliss, B. E. Grabill, Vick Fulton, Dr. George Sexton, J. A. Galbreath, J. W. Davis, E. Haddad, W. D. Castle, C. C. Hutchinson, W. J. Fullilove, Eugene Hamiter, C. E. Beaird, C. E. Fullerton, W. A. Bains, J. G. Lantz, R. E. Wyche, Robin L. Smith.

The Four Square Bible Class was affected also by the second World War which reduced the number of young men attending all the churches. Perhaps the momentum of those early years in the twenties and thirties began to wane and many of the dramatic promotional programs such as contests, special days and big advertisements were no longer used. The class dropped many non-attending members and its membership now became a close knit fellowship of active participants. At the same time the quality of the teaching program continued at a high level under Dean Smith's leadership and there was a steady if not spectacular addition of new members to replace those who for whatever reasons had dropped out.

We need also to recognize that the church in general during these later decades faced a growing competition with the secular world. The changing social situation made the sabbath day a time for recreation rather than for church attendance and the new society on wheels found the roads leading away from church and Sunday School. These also were factors that caused the Four Square Bible Class to reach a plateau in membership and attendance.

### **A Tale of Statistics**

As we trace the curve of membership and attendance of the Four Square Bible Class from its beginning the statistics reflect the changing conditions already mentioned, and the big years were indeed the first two decades.

At a class business meeting on February 15, 1924, J. S. Reily, membership

secretary, reported some interesting statistics for the previous year 1923: Total enrolled January 1, 1923 was 358. In 1923 there were 337 new members added, but also there were 220 dropped from the roll that year, leaving a membership of 75 as of January 1, 1924.

When president Glenn N. Walker, Jr., gave his report for 1940-1941 he included a summary of the average attendance each year from the beginning of the class.

In 1924 the average attendance was 525, a record. In 1928 it was 422. In 1930 it was 318.

On May 4, 1934 Tom Burbank, executive secretary of the class, reported the following to the National Federation of Men's Bible Classes: "Average attendance near 300, membership 660, radio members 200".

At the class business meeting October 10, 1938 secretary Harry Deal reported the average attendance as 225, and of this number 65 were women.

In president Glenn N. Walker, Jr.'s report mentioned earlier some interesting details are included for 1940-1941. The weekly average attendance was 200 and April registered the largest at 247. This figure was broken down as follows: ladies 77, other visitors 27, members 113, unregistered attendance 80.

In 1937-38 special concern was expressed by the membership committee that many members were not attending the class sessions, and their names were distributed among the active members for cultivating. All ill and shut-in members were contacted each week by the Brotherhood Committee. Much of this work was carried on by a Lost Sheep Committee created in 1930.

In addition to the special days which were used to create city-wide interest and bring in new members, the class introduced Membership Contests from time to time. One such contest was scheduled for six months in 1929 with two divisions of the class headed by A. S. Fowler and Frank McElroy. On Easter Sunday, the last day of the contest, winners were announced, and prizes were awarded. These contests not only brought in new members and increased attendance but also created much fun and fellowship as the rival teams worked to outdo each other.

In the 1950's attendance averaged slightly more than 150, and some special campaigns such as the twenty percent plan did bring the attendance up to 193. During this revival period records show that the increased attendance was largely due to visitors. By 1960 and 1970 attendance continued near the one hundred mark where it has stabilized. As the average age of the members of the class edged upward and many of the early members passed on, the proportion of women increased until they represented at least half of the total attendance.

During its more than fifty year history the Four Square Bible Class has had a fluctuating membership and attendance as noted above due to its interdenominational character and its big, early growth. Many members were attracted by the wide publicity and the great special days of the class. After a few months they dropped out, and as noted earlier new classes in other churches claimed their allegiance. As First Methodist Church began to develop an extensive Christian Education Program of its own in the 1940's, many other adult classes were formed



offering other types of Christian studies and methods. This fact has affected the growth rate of the Four Square Class. In 1978 the church had twenty-six classes in the adult section of the church school and had developed a study curriculum utilizing a new closed circuit television system for every class room. In the midst of all these changes the Four Square Class has maintained its distinctive format. It became an integral part of the Church Adult Program and at the same time preserved its inter-denominational appeal and its independence of operation.

### **After Fifty Years - And Beyond**

The fiftieth anniversary of the class was celebrated March 18, 1973, with a Golden Jubilee program featuring James S. Reily, Percy N. Browne, the only living charter members of the class, and Mrs. Gertrude Hile, who had served the class as secretary and publisher of the Bulletin since 1953. The teachers of the class at that time were Charles Rollins, successor to Dean R. E. Smith, and the Rev. Porter Caraway, a retired minister serving on the church staff as minister to the senior citizens. The attendance on that day was 130. It is interesting to note that the same organization and program format that was developed when the class was first formed is still being used, all of which attests to the wisdom of the founding fathers.

As the class enters the new era of its history it seems well established among the other adult classes of the church. As noted earlier the general membership has grown older and is now dominated by senior citizens, but at the same time new members have continued to join, and younger couples are taking leadership roles. This gives the class an inter-generational quality and a broader base of Christian fellowship.

### **Values of Four Square**

As the Four Square Bible Class faces the future and prepares to meet the challenge of a rapidly changing world, what traditional values does it bring forward and how are they to be related to its new role in the church?

Its first distinctive value lies in its systematic study of the Bible in the liberal tradition of Dean R. E. Smith. This means the future recruitment of excellent teachers by the church authorities, teachers who can combine the historical approach to the Bible with lessons of faith. The teachers will continue to be the major factors in the success of the class.

High on the list of priorities should be the continuance of good fellowship manifested in a concerned Christian community. This means the informal Sunday gathering prior to the formal lesson period and the various other occasions for fellowship such as the monthly business-social meetings, the Christmas open house, the annual barbeque and scenic bus trips.

The class needs also to preserve its interdenominational appeal so that all persons regardless of church background will feel at home. Although its member-

ship will continue to be largely Methodist, persons from other churches should be welcomed and encouraged to support their own church. The Bible should continue to be the common bond uniting all church members who attend the Four Square Bible Class.

Most certainly the Four Square Bible Class should continue its service outreach. The church has many programs of community and world service in which the class can participate. The budget of the class has always been adequate for the calls upon it and the executive committee should continue urging all members to share in the financial program.

The future life of the Four Square Bible Class lies within the body of the church. From its very beginning the church was its parent, and although it developed as a semi-independent unit, one of its earliest purposes was to gather men from all churches and send them back to these churches with a deeper understanding of the Bible and a new desire to serve.

Paul saw the church as the body of Christ with many parts "fitly joined together". The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline states it this way: "The church is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It exists in and for the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. It is the function of the local church to minister to the needs of persons, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all age groups as minimal expectations of an authentic church". At the center of the church's life stands the Bible with its revelation through Christ and God's continuing word through the Holy Spirit. The Four Square Bible Class is not only a part of this Body of Christ, but it represents a special function of the church as teacher of Biblical faith.





**The Four Square Bible Class 1977**  
**Officers and teachers front row and kneeling**



## CHAPTER XIII

### SIGNS - O' - THE TIMES

Dean Smith was not only a teacher and preacher but also a prolific writer and commentator on current events. Over a period of forty years these terse and perceptive comments were written and carried in the class Bulletins under the titles of "Signs-O-The Times" and "Dear Elmer". Each Sunday morning prior to his lesson-lecture he would discuss some particular current event usually embellished with humorous connotations.

The title of these weekly commentaries is derived from Matthew's Gospel where the Pharisees ask Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, no doubt to prove some of his assertions about God's forthcoming acts of judgment. His reply was calculated to reveal their lack of spiritual insight with reference to the work of God: "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky (weather), but you cannot interpret the signs of the times".

As one peruses the files of these bulletins from first to last, he is impressed with the wide range of this fertile mind and its perceptive analysis of current events. The forty year period of 1920-1960 during which these comments were written was a time of earth shaking events and revolutionary changes: from Lindbergh's single engine plane in 1927 to the age of the jumbo jets in the early sixties; the Great Depression years and the Roosevelt era of government regulations, social security, and medicare; the atomic bomb and World War II with its vast devastation of the civilized world; world-wide social changes and revolutions led by the burgeoning communism of Europe and its conquest of China; the rise of the Third World states of Africa the new nation of Israel and the awakening of the Arab-Moslem civilization; the witch hunt for Communism in the churches, the Civil Rights Movement in America, the widening gap between rich and poor, the polarization of political liberals and conservatives, and the rapid growth of government welfare programs. These are but a few of the kaleidoscopic changes which Dean Smith observed during his forty years at Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class and which were the source of his comments in his "Signs-O-The Times". These weekly writings were quick recordings of his rapid-fire mind. He dashed them off each day as the thoughts came pouring out, without editing or rewriting. They are witty, terse and often poetic and profound. His "Dear Elmer's" often introduced a tongue-in-cheek observation of some recent event or some human foible of the day. All of these reflections on current events provide us with a mosaic window through which we can catch a glimpse of this great man's mind and soul.

In tracing Dean Smith's threads of thought expressed in his "Signs-O-The Times" each week over a forty year period, we must consider not only the tumultuous events and swift changes but also the maturing and aging process in his own life. Some of his views on labor, war, government, education, business,

foreign affairs, women's rights, prohibition, and famous personalities expressed in 1920 may have changed in 1960. But throughout these changes one consistent note prevailed: The Bible speaks meaningfully to all life situations, and God works in history to create his own Kingdom through Jesus Christ.

The Dean himself would be the first to admit his limited judgment in regard to some of the emerging social issues of the day if he could look back from our present point in time, as at some future date we also shall be aware of our own limited understanding of current events. Even the Hebrew prophets did not always see the full significance of current events. If Dean Smith were watching the writing of this manuscript he would say with characteristic humility, "Don't try to make me more than life size!"

In this limited space we can quote only a sampling of his "Signs-O-The Times" and these have been carefully selected and grouped to reflect his general views on a hanging world.

### **If I Were A Converted Rich Man**

Nicodemus was one. He has been slandered all over this country. It always does me good to come to his rescue. All my life I've heard how he came to Jesus by night - cowardly - slipping up back alleys lest some one should see him. Look at the facts. The preceding chapter closes with the statement that Jesus knew what was in man and would not trust himself to the set at Jerusalem who claimed to believe in him. But - there was one man in this bunch that Jesus did trust himself to and told him things he had not told any person in the world. It was to this Nicodemus that he said, "God so loved the world" etc. It was here to this man he said that he, the Son of man, must be lifted up even as Moses lifted up the Serpent, that whosoever believeth might not perish. Do you think Christ would say such wonderful things to a coward or insincere man? Jesus found him so earnest, so ripe for spiritual truth that he talked out of his heart what he could not say to the public, to his mother nor any disciples.

No, Nicodemus came by night in order that he might get a close-up on Jesus and have no interruptions.

I wish I could have heard this conversation. Not Socrates sitting with his cup of hemlock talking with the disciples is half so interesting as this teacher of Israel and Christ. They talked of new birth, the kingdom and Eternal Life! Not a word was said about "success" - "the tariff" or business outlook!. Nothing of oil, or cotton or the market. One very rich and high up - the other a carpenter out of a job, yet as man to man they talked out of their hearts about things that have out-lived two thousand cotton crops. Nicodemus represented the best of philosophy of the old school, and Christ was the truth and authority for all ages and schools.

If I were a rich man - converted - I'd use my business sense and time and influence to make men instead of profits. I'd not give my money all away but invest it in man-making industries instead of profits. I'd rather save 10,000 men than \$10,000.

January 17, 1926



## How Souls Grow

It is normal and right that children, when grown, should leave home and go out into the world. But all dread the day of leaving. So did Jacob. Good reason! His twin brother was planning to kill him - he must get out! Jacob was a trickster. He had cheated his brother, stolen his inheritance, deceived his blind, aged father and now flees for his life.

After running for two or three days he reaches the frontier at nightfall, worn out. Lying down, supperless and forlorn, with a stone for a pillow, he dreams. Angels ascend and descend while God stands above blessing him. He arises next morn with fear, saying, "Surely God is here but I knew it not!" Then, indeed, obedience to the vision he begins to grow a soul.

The visions disturbed Jacob. He found a bigger God than he had imagined. He found God out there in the wild, lonely border. God can't be outrun. Our religious life must expand hand-in-hand with our scientific age. Alas for a man whose ideas of God do not keep pace with his own growing intellect. (5-30-25)

## Why They Killed The Christ

How could men bring themselves to the point of killing the best man who ever lived? He harmed no one; He went about doing good only. He took no fees, wrote no laws, asked no votes, sought no office - yet they laid plans early to kill him and finally succeeded! Start a good movement today and it has hard, slow bedding - why?

1. Because it's new and different, involving change. Men are conservative and want the status quo.
2. Because it might interfere with their investments, profits and happiness.
3. Because they can't read **Motives**. They imagine Christ even was up to some sinister design; they couldn't vision any one with an unselfish aim. They judge the good by themselves. If they were leading such a popular movement; if they had that power etc. they'd get something out of it!
4. Hence, it's because men at heart are sinful. This bent and bias to sin makes the natural, unregenerate, man hate the good, misunderstand the good and fight the good.

## Saul Of Tarsus

A celebrated lover said: "I can't define beauty - but come with me and I'll show it to you!" Neither can I define the superlative life but I can show it to you in Saul of Tarsus. Viewed from any standpoint he is one of the giants of history.

When he and Silas came to Thessalonica his enemies said, "They that have turned the world upside down have come here". At another place he blocked traffic for two hours. In another town he caused a bonfire in the public square in which \$14,000 worth of books were burned - their owners having outgrown them



after hearing Paul. Here he is being worshipped as a god. Yonder forty leading citizens band themselves together with a solemn oath not to eat or sleep until they have killed him. He out talks mobs, out does wizards and magicians, turns the supreme court into an uproar, frightens a governor and king, and in a storm and shipwreck he becomes the hero and saves 276 lives!

His reward? Arrived in Rome do you not think that shipwrecked company would have presented petitions urging the release of such a hero? No; we read only of two years in prison. In a rented house, chained day and night to a soldier, Paul so lived and so presented the gospel that his guards were converted and they in turn spread the truth to Caesar's household. Also, from his prison walls he writes four glorious epistles urging his readers to rejoice with him. Like Joseph in jail in Egypt he thought that God had somehow taken a hand in it all. Who knows but that Paul's Epistles written in this prison, and preserved for us today and forever, are not worth much more to the world than would have been his freedom and busy public preaching and royal welcome in Rome?

### **Human Engineering**

In the story of Dives and Lazarus Jesus digs deep into character. Stripped of his purple the rich man shows stark selfishness. Beneath his ulcers Lazarus shines, pure gold. Dives goes to Hell not because he was rich.

He is not charged with dishonesty. No cruelty. Indeed, he fed Lazarus, else the beggar would not have been laid habitually at the rich man's gate. Dives was liberal, Lazarus had all he could eat. But - Dives considered the state of the beggar fixed when it was not. The rich man could have changed it and didn't. The gulf between rich and poor can be bridged, by human engineering! And men are digging the chasm deeper every day. When, after death, the rich man asked help he found then that the gulf was really fixed - but it had not always been so.

"Send Lazarus -" still wanting servants! But no word of penitence; no change in character. Still eager for comfort - ease. "My five brothers, send him to warn them!" Why not go himself? "They have Moses and the prophets". So, the scriptures lay neglected at one gate and Lazarus at the other. (5-1-66)

### **Can Man Find God?**

Every lover of art, every patron of culture and beauty thrills over Athens, the eye of Greece - home of the matchless Parthenon. Athens displayed "the grandeur that was Greece". Here Socrates, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations of philosophy: here Phidias wrought, Pericles scintillated and its masterpieces of oratory, drama, sculpture and architecture still charm the world.

The restless soul of Paul was stirred by so much near-perfection. In the forest of statues of gods, the one true God was lost. Yet Athens was hungry for Him. The altar "To the Unknown God" became Paul's text. On Mar's Hill he stood before cold rational judges proud of their learning and of their city. Tactfully, Paul

set forth his thesis: God is personal, Universal and Spiritual - not materialistic, pantheistic, polytheistic. Nor is he blind force or law - but a Father not far from every one of us. Paul brought God nearer than ancient Jewish law. In Christ, the risen One, he found the goal of life and man.

### **The Golden Rule In The Rule Of God**

When Christians were burned, fed to lions and crucified by Roman tyrants bent on exterminating the church, persecution only aided the truth it sought to destroy. But today a greater test than ever is facing the church. Can the Church today solve the problem of industry? Can it work the Golden Rule in business? We are proud of asserting that those nations that have had the gospel are the "civilized" nations, the most prosperous ones. Why then do we have so much unrest? Why then do we have so much competition, bitter class-hatreds, unemployment, strikes and lockouts? With capital highly organized on one side and labor unionized on the other side we have industry divided into two hostile war camps. Often violence is open and blood flows freely. All in a highly "civilized" and, rich beyond words, almost over-churched and nominally accepting the Bible.

Now the Bible is full of teaching on this line. Hear Deuteronomy ordering that employers not oppress laborers; that wages be just, prompt and that personal care go along with wages. The poorer and more helpless the employee, the more responsibility devolves upon the employer to protect his weaker brother. Then comes Ephesians presenting the other side urging the worker to be honest, diligent, returning a full day's work and to be careful of the owner's interests. Then comes Paul showing how God's interest enfolds both and all.

The old time personal relationship between employer and employee is gone. Men become parts of the huge machine and grind out an existence drab and hopeless. On the other hand keen competition, high overhead and glutted market may force the owner to run his plant for months at a loss.

Why not industrial democracy? It is really the Golden Rule in factory and shop and it will work. The Gospel must take on a wider application than individualism and a more immediate appeal than Heaven or Hell! (1940)

### **The Church**

"Who do you say I am?" Came Peter's word: "Thou art the Christ - the Messiah". "True, blessed art thou, Peter! Upon this rock I will build my church!" Which church?

Every denomination that holds the Headship - the Deity of Jesus Christ. He is the head - they are many branches - like the Vine that he declared Himself to be. One common life blood flows through them all - if they bear fruit through Him. Love for each and love for Him should mark all.

The church, too, as well as the individual that would save its life must be willing to lose it - for the cause of justice, peace, brotherhood. Creeds, organiza-



tion, money - all must stand aside. Now as never before there is insistent call to the church to live up for human needs. When men are starving and women are denied the chance to earn a decent living it is treason to Christ to keep silent or to chant outworn creeds and to lip crusted shibboleths. Human welfare is more sacred than theological dogma. Jesus went to the cross not for doctrines but for sheer love of men - all men! Today the Carpenter is building His church on the eternal rock of Human Brotherhood - since each man is, potentially - at least, a son of God!

### **Living In The Lowlands**

Our hearts are stirred at the flood situation. The delta and valleys are submerged: towns are marooned, while thousands are homeless. Refugees are climbing out of the lowlands. Millions of dollars are raised and justly spent for relief. How much better to have heeded warnings and to have protected the lowlands adequately.

Just so in the moral realm: we live in unprotected low-levels of spiritual life and trust to luck or good fortune to get us by without disaster. We make no provision for sudden and overwhelming temptation. We are content with most anything in religion. Despite the warnings of Jesus Peter followed afar off, he dined and cursed and made a spectacle of himself! He the chief apostle - the rock-man! (5-15-27)

### **Total Depravity**

We believe that total depravity means that man is totally unable to save himself. But God promises to help everyone who has even a least desire to be saved. "Whosoever wills" may come. "God so loved the world" - The whole world! (10-16-55)

### **Adam and Eve**

When Adam and Eve first sinned they tried to hide and cover up. But God graciously taught them to slay animals as sacrifice and to use the skins as clothes. This is but poetry teaching us that no effort of man, or venture or culture can hide our guilt. Only sacrifice and persistence will do! (10-7-55)

### **Christians and the Law**

Today man finds himself caught in a whirl of laws, conflicting opinions and customs. Which is final criterion? What shall be his attitude toward law in general? Naturally one turns to the Bible and finds it full of law and morals. Said Blackstone: "Any law that contravenes the Bible is no law at all". Also, St. Peter and St. Paul both insist that Christians obey all laws of the land. How then could Paul endorse



such a regime? On the ground that any organized form of government is better than anarchy.

The early Apostles were subjects of government - not participators in it. We today in our great republic are the government. We make the laws; we change them. Upon us therefore falls a responsibility greater than mere obedience. Back of our government stands a social agreement that we will make our own laws, maintain our own rights, promote our general welfare, all through the consent of our citizenry that the will of the majority shall be law, obeyed and observed by all until changed through due process. The minority of course has a perfect right to seek, by legal means, to change the law or to convert the majority to its views.

To my mind there is something better than enforcing law. It is the duty of measuring up to the responsibilities of citizenship. Let there be no shirking, no evasion of the duty of making laws for the good of society as a whole. No Christian should expect any law to protect him if it at the same time injures society in general. How may we best train our young people to see this?

### **Were The Prophets Wrong?**

One of earth's pioneers for Democracy was Micah, the Morashtite. Rugged, brave, fiercely moral, he battled for human rights. For better living conditions, more equal distribution of goods, the rights of the common man Micah thundered. So vivid is his sense of exploitation practiced by some that he says they eat the flesh of the poor.

Disaster awaits such a nation. Because Israel's leaders were blind to these elemental truths Micah said Zion should be plowed like a field.

So he gives us the best definition of goodness. "What is good?" he asks and answers: "to do justice, to love mercy and walk humbly with thy God." These words are carved in stone over the door of the Library of Congress.

Finally, he has a vision of world peace. After wars and sin have had their day and burned themselves out nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and learn war no more. The Prince of Peace will come and men will follow Him. Were the prophets wrong? It seems far off and visionary now, but they were right on other big things. And today - despite a strange world war raging and ruining peace, sentiment is growing faster than ever. The futility of arms stands revealed as never before. The insanity of it all is robbing it of its glamour and glory and men are gorged with the horrible thing. We must begin to plan for peace now, a rational, just, moral, lasting peace. We sacrifice tremendously for war; for peace let us also make some sacrifices - NOW!

### **What Shall We Do About Prohibition?**

#### **(Before Repeal)**

Prohibition has been blamed with everything bad that plagues us today, from

depression to athlete's foot! Some want it changed, modified or repealed. Others want a referendum - leave it to the people. This seems fair but it is not constitutional, and the Supreme Court has declared there is no provision in the Constitution for such a thing.

Many mistakes were made by raw men and bad methods of enforcement. It was a new experiment. Better results are now shown. May we not plead for cooperation, for patience, for the American spirit of fair play until we have given it a reasonable test and try out? Then, if not effective, will be time to ask for modification or repeal. I for one, then will join you in seeking a change if you will help us now - or at least not hinder until we can have an honest trial.

### **"Six Days Shall Thou Labor"**

Dean Smith speaks of labor's demand for a five day week:

"The same command that gives us the Sabbath says 'six days shalt thou labor', but when men only labor half of the time what will they do with all their leisure?"

The labor Union leader (Carpenters) replied in a Times article (R. H. Johnston):

"Dean Smith in challenging the morality of the five day week, takes an attitude inconsistent with religion adapted to this epoch in industry. We, of the laboring class, believe that modern methods and machinery demand an equivalent of energy to the six day period of former times and we believe that modern methods and machinery demand an equivalent of energy to the six day period of former times and we believe that Christ, the carpenter, would support us with His influence because He is one of us and He knows our spiritual as well as our physical and material needs." (1929)

### **"Why Race Prejudice?"**

Why any sort of prejudice? It is **not** natural. Children do not have it. It is taught and caught from their elders.

The growth of men and nations is measured by the degree to which they rid themselves of prejudice. Contrast Peter and Paul on this. Both were Jews - narrow and exclusive. Peter painfully and slowly emerged while Paul gladly and quickly over-leaped all barriers and freed himself from the shackles crying, "I am debtor to all men!"

After all prejudice indicates imperfect development. Ultimately, by religion, education and closer contacts we shall have the world-minded citizens fostering peace, producing geniuses as commonly as now we produce average men. Then each race will pour into the stream of life its rich contribution and earth will offer to heaven its supremest specimens.

### **Race Prejudice Waning?**

Here's something brand new. Other day over in Mississippi (Bless ye!) white

men went to the polls and these white citizens voted an extra tax on themselves  
ust to help negro schools! They sent cars and hauled voters to the polls. Now,  
say the world don't move, despite wars, hate and high taxes! (1940)

### Change and Decay

Nothing is so certain as change . . . From Alexander to Hegel the wise have  
noted the inevitable, inexorable law of change. That which serves not the best -  
he highest ends of man - must go!! Tragedy comes as each age believes itself  
ixed, secure . . . Its institutions, ideals, culture are to abide. So, felt the Ephesians  
with their vices, superstitions, false religion. Came Paul with something better.  
The halfgods had to go! Gone are the Pharaohs and the Sphinx looks out over  
he vast wastes of sand - a grim sentinel of the voiceless past. Because the  
yrants failed to serve they and their power crumbled - leaving but Sphinxes and  
Pyramids to tell the story of their futile lives. Because slavery, the feudal system,  
duelling, star-chamber and inquisition had more of ill than of good - they passed.

### Four Gospels - Four Rivers

One of the early church fathers was enamored of the similarity of four gospels  
and four rivers. In Eden the river flowed out of the garden in four branches; in the  
wake of Christ's life there flowed out four gospels. Origen thought this all God's  
plan to cleanse and make fruitful the earth.

Back of the four rivers of Eden there was **one river** or God. Back of the four  
gospels there was one gospel - not written but **lived** out triumphantly - then told  
y father to son, preached everywhere. Before any books there was the **life**, then  
he selected group - a vast movement - finally came the books.

### Shall We Have War?

By all means if we are to have war let's all know who (and at what price)  
ells Uncle Sam the bombs, tanks, shells, guns, trucks, gas masks, etc. Let's  
also see the records of how much of these they **FIRST** sold and shipped Japan  
and Austria or Oshkoshki, and then paid spell-binders to scare us into bigger  
preparedness" - because these other nations were mad at us! And we still fall  
or this stuff!

If we'd stop these private profiteers in war supplies and not **allow any sales**  
**outside** U.S.A. and then in case of war take over the factories and supply our-  
selves **AT COST** we'd save about 200% in cash and **NOT** have **WAR!!** Wars are  
made now - for profit - by a world interlocking munitions Trust! Why not bust that  
Trust? (3-4-34)

### Don't Militarize Our College!

The last war (WWI) saw our colleges almost wrecked - the SATC and ROTC



on our campuses. Never again, please. The cocky little army captains and lieutenants buck swashing and cussing our faculty, ordering students out of S.S. and church for Sunday drills and turning good church colleges into rattling sabre camps and showing by every act that civilian life is not only inferior but secondary to the military. Education sank to zero. Religion went into discard. Never again we hope (1940)

### **Defense**

Cannons, planes, guns and billions of dollars can't defend us unless there is something deep down in our hearts worth defending. Homes (not shacks), sacreties, respect for womanhood, regular work honestly done, adequate wages with hope of security, church and school accessible to all, freedom of speech and press, fair and equal application of law, open handed justice in courts, and a populace well united in spiritual ideals - these make a country worth defending. Let's hope we have it. (1941)

### **The Militarists**

Don't get the idea that the militarists have quit! On the contrary, they are quietly gripping this land and are surely gaining control. They are keen a plenty and will change our glorious republic into a military power like Germany and Japan were. Have you noticed that they are taking over most of our foreign policy? More Generals and Admirals are being appointed as ambassadors and they're bossing our State Department too. So-o-o a little later they'll swoop down on us and take over conscription, turning us into an armed camp and making all other nations hate us! (3-31-46)

### **Chamberlain**

Hitler and Mussolini are again going into a huddle at the Brenner Pass . . . Chamberlain is out. Poor old umbrella wouldn't shelter him any longer. Thus departs one of the old school. Let him rest. But the cabinet is still conservative. Churchill gives labor a nice share but nothing like a loud voice. The Liberals are still rather slimly represented. (1940)

### **Miscellanea**

And the Hydrogen and Atoms which God intended for the highest Potency and Power to turn the wheels of commerce, to heat our homes and relieve men of living like human moles under ground mining coal; and to give us Peace on Earth! Behold, man has turned 'em into engines of Horrendous Death and International Destruction! (1959)

Before Congress the new deal or anyone else, the church stood for labor

right to organize, for collective bargaining and many other rights not yet granted. Rich and poor alike are God's. The church needs to reread her charter and bring both labor and capital to the foot of the cross. (1936)

The AA's (God Bless 'em again) are doing a fine work of rehabilitation, but we need more Prevention! Education. Agitation. Legislation and Determination! (1940)

Eternal God, look with pity upon thy sinning and wayward children. Help us personally and nationally to repent and turn to Thee for Divine guidance in this critical hour of world history. Give insight and wisdom unto leaders of Church and State that ways may be found to bring Peace on Earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Cuba**

At last Cuba has a stable government - after the horses are about all killed. We are now on speaking terms with the new president - ready to lend him some millions. I'd give my last gingersnap to find out how much wire-pulling the millionaire American land owners over there did to put this thing across! Americans own half of Cuba. (1934)

### **Dogs**

Our good doctor told us to exercise - go walking - hike! We did. Boy, what an experience. Every second house has a dog or dogs. Do they bark and set up a wolfish din? And do they stay in their yards? Or chase you down the whole block? By that time a new one takes up the pursuit. Big dogs, little dogs, pugs, pitizes, terriers, bulls, pups, superannuates, pensioned, toothless dogs, hounds, moon-bayers, escaped-convict dogs, airdales - and Dales without air - just low-down dogs! "But they won't bite" - said Sweet Thing. Of course not - neither will the mice blinking at you while you eat! (1934)

### **Automation**

When three men can touch levers and press buttons operating assembly lines that have formerly required 1200 men - what are these displaced, unemployed men to do? Hang around the saloon, "the poor man's friend" and become "**Men of Distinction**"?

### **Heaven and Work**

In heaven even the tree of life changes its fruit every month - different. This is only a parable showing how our tasks will be ever changing, fresh and creative!

## **Nature Not Inflated**

What if nature had framed up on us and soaked us with inflation? Roses and tulips, pansies and violets blush and coquet us freely and lavishly as of yore. Sheep grow just as good and fleecy wool as in our childhood - but look at the price today! (To say nothing of the shoddy material they put in our clothing!) AND HENS, BLESS 'EM - they dig and scratch just as hard as ever. Unselfishly lay the worms at the biddies' feet - or even in their open mouths, give us the eggs, so fresh and luscious. And never cackles hypocritically! Don't you recall buying eggs at ten cents per dozen? (but, softly now, excuse me, Elmer, when all's said and done, I'd rather live NOW and pay the diff!)

## **Falling Leaves**

Leaves are falling now that autumn is here. They fall everywhere - in yards on walks and on porches. They have served their purpose. Once they were a source of light and life. Now the trees drop them freely, gladly.

LEAVES ARE LIKE IDEAS in the mind. They come when needed. They flourish and give light, life, and wisdom. When ideas have served their purpose they need to be swept away, lest they block the way for new ideas. We must constantly sweep out the old to make way for the new.

## **The Old Wood Fire**

The first touch of fall calls for the old wood fire - the crackle and sputter and captivating glow which scatters our gloom and melts our sourness against the world.

Did you ever sit late at night and watch the leaping, lapping flames? Ceaselessly licking each other, twisting and wrapping around lingering splinters of wood, they pictured the drama of life. Elmer? Motion, change, constant change, light, playful energy, hope, defeat - yet all moving and pointing upward!

## **Welcome, Sweet Springtime!**

All hail, thrice welcome to glorious, growing, gorgeous Spring! Equinoxes, bursting buds, coquetting moons, Cathedral lanes, singing trees, trilling birdies, woodland echoes, feathery panoramic cloudlets flitting glamorously through the sky, country swains and maidens, joyous jocund farmers whistling quicksteps - no wonder hearts beat faster, pulses lisp and applaud the transforming, resurrecting power of the most exhilarating time of the year!

But don't forget it's spiritual meaning:

Coming just after ice-locked winter has hard bound and arrested Nature and screamed with delight, as if permanent victor, the quiet all-conquering Sun, balm, beaming, arises - his warming rays kiss away Nature's frozen tears raising the world's Hosannah chorus of final victory!



Besides all this - it's the Lenten Season. Which is the hall-way to Easter!

### Man's Assault On Nature

Before blaming God for natural disasters - consider how man has denuded the hills, slaughtered the trees (nature's flood control), not sparing even the saplings, but slashing, mashing and breaking 'em up in our rush to markets and quick profits! No reforestation until recently! As for smogs, bogs, and air pollution, just shut your eyes and think of factories belching out blankets and clouds of smoke, chemicals and soot. add to this millions of autos with wicked, poisonous exhausts, and bombers and airplanes sifting down their contributions of waves and layers of who-done-it!

### Youth Revolts

Blow, blow, bluster and whine! O yez, winter holds his undisputed sway.  
Hear the wail of the Bard of Avon,

“Blow, blow thou winter wind,  
Thou art not more unkind  
Than man's ingratitude.”

Especially when found in our children today. Recall, Elmer, how old King Lear was turned out to the wintry elements by his own daughters?

Did you ever hear of so many kids killing their parents. Least restraint or provocation produces gun play and bullets. A father rebukes his son for not raking the snow off the steps and the boy kills him. A mother corrects her son for not cleaning his room and he promptly shoots her. Who's to blame? All of us! Cowardly homes afraid to discipline the children. Or if a rare orderly home is found it is an isolated island completely surrounded by a surging sea of turbulent, riotous kids from unregulated homes! A frothy, fatuous, dreary school system! Johnny must not be restrained lest his personality be warped! (Of course, the fond parents have his hair cut and nails trimmed). When adolescence arrives Johnny expressed himself by slaying the whole bunch! Covetous movies, lustful films, homes without altars, movies and TV without morals, fathers who walk out on their responsibilities. Of course, we know that there are bright spots, too. Most of our youth are still sane and sound in spite of what society does to them and they deserve awards for withstanding the powerful pull of the times.

### Couldn't Live Without It

I went to my doctor and he thumped around over me, sat at his little desk and scribbled (hard to read) on a piece of paper and saying “give this to your pharmacist” - **never said a word!** Neither I nor the man behind the counter said a word as I handed him the prescription. But he quickly disappeared and left me standing there wondering and philosophizing. I never have been able to under-

stand why these medicine boys have to hide when they compound these mysterious concoctions they hand out to us! **In due time:** He finally reappeared, smiling evidently at the bill which shook me to the bottom of my pocketbook! But, the point I make is: **Faith!** First of all I had faith in my doctor and the medical research he represented. Next, I had faith in that youngster who filled the prescription. Then I had faith in the manufacturer who made the stuff, and on and on it goes!

### **“Zipperized”**

You see, Elmer, everything that's up to date these days must be standardized, synchronized, zipperized.

Buttons have gone out of style; passe, plebeian - just not done any more!

And when the zipper is congenial and on friendly terms, I must admit, things zip along smoothly.

But, alas! When Brother Zip goes on a sit-down strike, or rises on the wrong side of the bed - lookout! Trouble's gonna start. You may squirm, twist, jerk, pull, sweat, yank, pet, cajole, beg until the teardrops start - but the thing is relentless, impervious, implacable!

The secret of the whole thing, Elmer, is - there must be complete harmony along zipper's "runway", not a thing to clog the cogs, or intrude on the right-of-way! And the **angle** of motion must be carefully respected and maintained.

### **The Whirligig of Time**

Time has such whimsical moods and tenses! Austere and remorseless, Time upsets our china shops and never looks around to view the havoc he has wrought.

Witness how he has blurred and telescoped childhood. Fond memory loves to relieve yester-year's childhood days, so long, lingering and eventful, with father, mother, brothers and sisters - a charmed and magic circle, "The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wildwood and every loved spot my infancy knew".

**But, now how changed and spoiled!** Today's childhood, with all its improvements and advantages has lost, irretrievably lost, the priceless privilege of a long, slow tutelage and fellowship with their elders, with nature and God!

Now the darlings jump out of the cradle into long pants, run to the telephone, turn on (rarely off) the TV, swap dates, consider divorce all before they even think of shaving.

### **Future Shock!**

Elmer, I'm simply aghast, dumbfounded, befuddled! My perplexity stems from the fact that we've just entered a new earth-shocking age - without any preparation for, announcement of, or explanation about it.

And we're not adjusted to it. Can't be soon. Yet the thing is here and won't wait. Before our very eyes it's whizzing along and we, stupefied and stunned

think we're dreaming!

I'm talking about this new Nuclear Age - releasing atomic power which will astonish and help the world more than steam or electricity, Elmer! (9-4-55)

### **Fashion Slaves**

Don't look now, Elmer, but if you think we're free and not slaves just take a gander at these straw hats in cold, snowy springtime! Who says "straw hat times"? Who says put your straw away and get a new felt hat? The commercial czars, bosses of style, pop the whip and we dance! Regardless of comfort we'll wear tights, or shorts, or sacks, or longies - anything the dictators say! And, the dear ladies, Elmer - I won't say more!

### **Women Preachers**

No, Elmer, I'm not opposed to women doing anything and everything they want to - **and CAN do.**

Did you see what the Methodists did for these ladies last week, Elmer?

Their big General Conference passed a law giving women **full** rights to preach, to become Pastors, to travel and hold office in Conferences and to become Bishops if they want to, and can get votes!

The Conference granted the rights to all, married and unmarried! Of course they will have to become qualified, pass examinations, meet educational qualifications exactly as do the men.

Men must accept, welcome and help the new women Pastors. The future alone will tell the wisdom of this move. Some of the leaders of the Conference shook their heads. Some said, "This ends all hope of ever uniting the Methodist and the Episcopal Churches". The Episcopal Church could never accept women in the line of Apostolic orders and succession!

Some delegates quoted Paul's "Let women keep silent in the church". Others retorted, "Yes, keep silent in lands where no schools were for women!" And later Paul said, "Help those women," that is accept, receive those qualified. (1956)

### **Vacationitis and Happiness**

All of us desire it - sigh for it and fret ourselves almost into nervous prostration seeking it.

We often substitute vacationitis.

And this is a good time to try it out, Elmer! All honor to those who can take a good vacation. Go on - run the wheels off your car; sleep in all sorts of beds, drink all kinds of water; drive late at night hunting rooms at overcrowded motels and hotels; see so many sights your mind is overstuffed and you come home worn out from your vacation!

Happiness may be there and yonder - for it is everywhere, ubiquitous, omni-



present, like electricity; not seen but felt!

Happiness is not only shy itself - but **we** are shy about it also!

If we have found it we're shy about it, rarely admit it and unless it beams from our eyes, or radiates from our smile, you'd never know we were happy.

### Prayers

In the hour of sorrow, sadness or gloom, in pains embrace, or earth's too sweet allurements, suffer us not to depart from Thee, O Lord!

In age and feebleness, extreme be our Strength and hope. In youth be our guide and goal! Ever let us trust thee alone for salvation through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

O, Lord, our God, art thou not weary of our asking? Unworthy and unprofitable servants of thine, still we whine and beg for more. Or worse perhaps, we neglect thee entirely until a crisis floors us - and we then storm heaven for rescue!

Dear God, please reveal to us our real condition. Create within us a thirst for companionship with thee; show us how to achieve it for Christ's sake. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

O thou Eternal Spirit, we spend our lives as shadows flit across the fields - though thou hast set eternity in our hearts! Forgive us for allowing elusive Time to deceive us, thus exchanging present golden opportunity for spurious procrastination. Spirit Divine, brood over us this hour, breathe into us an alertness, a receptivity that will qualify us to receive an abiding blessing from thy holy word. In His name. Amen.



**Bentley Sloane and Chas. Rollins discussing how to teach the Book of Revelation.**



**Chas. H. Rollins followed Dean R. E. Smith as teacher of the Four Square Bible Class in September, 1960.**



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE GATHERING TWILIGHT

As we approach the end of our story, we bring into focus once again its chief character, Dean R. E. Smith. The heavy weight of years and the stern demands of his vocation had consumed him. With Paul he had fought the good fight, had finished his course and kept the faith. The "crown of righteousness" awaited him.

#### **Teacher, Pastor and Friend**

We must remember that Dean Smith was an ordained Methodist minister as well as a college professor. This dual role was exemplified in his work with the Four Square Bible Class and in his teaching career at Centenary.

As head of the Bible department Dean Smith was a brilliant and demanding professor guiding his students in the historical approach to Bible study and requiring of them intense study and research. Knowing that he was preparing students for the ministry as well as for lay Sunday School teaching in the church, he exposed them to the latest and most authentic Biblical and theological resources of the day, guiding them through lectures, discussions, and examinations.

The Four Square Bible Class offered the opportunity for teaching and preaching. Although his lectures were designed to provide Bible knowledge, he also used the material as sermon texts, and in his application of these to daily life he was eloquent, moving and a superb preacher. In the technical language of homiletics his lectures before the Four Square Bible Class would be classified as exegetical preaching. Although Sunday School quarterlies were distributed to the members, no one was expected to do much studying for next Sunday's lesson. A notorious condition in all Sunday Schools!

These two roles of teaching and preaching demanded many hours of study, and he had learned this discipline early in his life. Each lesson and each sermon were given special attention, and he did not rely on past manuscripts or previous lesson teaching outlines. His preparation was specifically for each occasion.

Dean Smith's services to the Four Square Bible Class extended far beyond his weekly Bible lectures. He was to the class teacher, pastor, counselor and correspondent. He attended all business and committee meetings of the class, accompanied the evangelistic teams in their visits to various communities, and opened his home to all those who wished to share with him some special concern. This was especially true when he lived near the college where so many students found their way into his home to discuss their academic problems, theories of theology and even their financial straits. Mrs. Smith was always the gracious hostess intruding only to give a word of welcome and to offer refreshments.

He consoled the ill and brokenhearted, stood by the grave of those deceased, married many couples, and baptized their children. A testimony to these many



services was written in a letter from Mrs. Annabell H. Bertrand, whose father, T. E. Hodges, was an early president of the Four Square Class. In part she said: "He was a dear friend to my family. He baptized me with water from the Holy Land. He married my husband and me in my grandmother's home in Cotton Valley in 1942, baptized all four of our children and buried both my father and my mother". Many testimonies of this kind can be found in scrapbooks and in other memorabilia.

From friends and class members he received many letters requesting answers to disturbing questions about the Bible. He patiently answered those requests in hand written letters, and many of these have been filed in the archives of the class.

The love, affection and esteem of the Four Square Bible Class for their great teacher were expressed in many ways both personally and as a class. A substantial Christmas gift of money was always forthcoming for the teacher. His birthdays were remembered, and through the years he and Mrs. Smith were showered with cards and letters of appreciation.

One of the big events in Four Square history as previously noted was a project to send Dean Smith to the Holy Land in 1926. Funds were raised with little effort.

He was presented with two automobiles during his tenure of teaching, a Nash in 1929 and a Chevrolet in 1947. With the advent of air conditioning the class installed a unit in his home. The Four Square piano, a gift of Hutchinson Brothers, was refinished and presented to the Smiths in 1951 as a sentimental gift of appreciation.

Although no salary was ever paid to Dean Smith by the Four Square Class these many outpourings of gifts of love and appreciation enriched the lives of Dean and Mrs. Smith and brought compensations not measureable by business ledgers.

### **Valedictory**

Dean Smith's final retirement in 1960 as teacher of the Four Square Bible Class was carefully planned and resolutely accomplished. There was no turning back. He was now eighty-six years of age, and the long, arduous years of toil coupled with the natural infirmities of old age had taken their toll. His classic letter of resignation was carried in the Four Square Bulletin August 28, 1960:

"After the blessed privilege of serving this wonderful class for forty years it now becomes my painful duty to step aside and leave the work to younger and abler hands.

"Thanks to the constant patience and forbearance of the past presidents, officers and committees; to Victor Larmoyeaux and his musicians for years of faithful service; to our devoted song leader David Corrie for almost forty years of efficient, dedicated service - never late! To our most valuable secretaries Bart and Gertrude Hile, ever alert and self-effacing. Nor can we forget the gracious courtesy of the radio station KRMD, who for more than thirty years has spread

our message abroad to shut-ins and a patient public - nor the old City Hall that sheltered us and whose crumbling walls now remind us of our own material condition - nor Werlein Music Company, whose halls we now enjoy - nor Gus Hickman our faithful janitor and elevator man, and a fond adieu to our lovely flags, the Christian and Old Glory!

"Amid the sadness of this age compelling farewell there gleams one radiant compensation and hope: we are extremely fortunate in finding a fully qualified and competent new teacher such as Charles H. Rollins. He is a successful and experienced teacher, an able and fluent speaker, a man of wide acquaintance and influence in the business world and a devout Christian gentleman. We commend him most heartily, Four Square is safe in his hands!

"Now, looking back over the years, all of your many courtesies, gifts and kindnesses - the blissful momentum of it all comes rolling over us with overwhelming emotion of gratitude and undying devotion! God's richest blessings on each one of you.

A fond adieu!" (Dean and Mrs. R. E. Smith.)

### **A Final Resolution**

On the day he stood before the Four Square Bible Class for the last time, August 28, 1960, he heard read at that time a warm and heartfelt resolution of appreciation for his forty years of service. (Again we call attention to the fact that "forty years" is a significant Biblical span). The closing section of this resolution is herein quoted:

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Four Square Bible Class accept the resignation of DEAN ROBERT EDWARD SMITH in keeping with his personal wishes and desires and in the full knowledge that no one can measure the good done by this man of Vision, who has exhibited always a sympathetic understanding of youth and whose rich fund of Truth, gleaned from the Masters of the Bible, Science and Literature, has been freely imparted to all that were fortunate enough to have come in contact with this man of Greatness, and in the further knowledge that he will forever be a part of and a guiding and eternal force in the future destinies of Four Square Bible Class.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we of the Four Square Bible class take this means of conveying to this faithful witness of Christ, to the limited extent that mere words permit, the esteemed reverence we hold for this man to whom God has committed so much and who has responded so generously and effectively during his wonderful life: and so we salute you DEAN ROBERT EDWARD SMITH - Teacher - Lecturer - Bible Scholar - College Professor - Minister of the Gospel - Musician - Author - Exceptional Penman - Avid Reader - Lover of Poetry and "Billy" Shakespeare - and we thank you for your sparkling sense of humor, the originality of your wonderful mind, and for your "God filled" and "God inspired" enthusiasm. For it is here that we come to find the real greatness of this Man of Inspiration, who has unquestionably been inspired by God. Yes, DEAN ROBERT EDWARD SMITH, you have, through your rare humor, the originality of your mind,



and your contagious enthusiasm, developed the highest and best human hungers in all who have been fortunate enough to sit at your feet. No teacher could do more. You are truly 'THE MAN WITH THE LAMP IN HIS HAND.' "

This resolution was signed by Arch Bewley, president, Bart Hile, secretary, and Garner Miller, resolutions chairman.

### **A Final Honor**

The year he resigned as teacher of the Four Square Bible Class and while he was still able to enjoy the fruits of his labor, his beloved Alma Mater bestowed a special honor upon him. Under the leadership of Dr. Joe J. Mickle, president of Centenary College, plans were made to erect a new building on the campus to be known as the R. E. Smith Religious Activities Building. This project would involve the Four Square Bible Class, the Methodist Conference Board of Education, and the entire Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Church. After approval by the Annual Conference of the Church a contract was signed on December 10, 1960, by Dr. Joe Mickle with Dean Smith looking on. The building was completed in October 1961 at a cost of approximately \$250,000. Those taking part in the cornerstone ceremony on October 1 were Dean and Mrs. R. E. Smith, Dr. Joe Mickle, President, Dr. Bentley Sloane, Executive Secretary of the Methodist Board of Education, Dr. Webb Pomeroy and Dr. Robert Ed Taylor of the Bible Department, Dr. B. C. Taylor and Dr. James T. Harris two prominent ministers who were students of Dean Smith at Ruskin Cave College of Ruskin, Tennessee, Dr. John B. Entriakin of the Chemistry department, H. H. Bain of the Four Square Bible class and Paul Brown Chairman of the College Board of Trustees. Among others present on that historic occasion were children of Dean Smith, Mrs. Ed Gilliam and Dr. Garland Smith of Emory University, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn N. Walker, Jr. and Dr. John L. Scales and the Rev. Samuel Riggs, two of the oldest living graduates of the college.

The R. E. Smith Building is the center of the religious life of the campus and houses the offices of the Council on Ministries of the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Church, offices and class rooms of the Department of Religion, a student lounge, and a chapel-auditorium.

The bronze tablet in the foyer of the building is fittingly inscribed:

Robert Edward Smith  
His teaching inspired his students  
His enthusiasm made learning exciting  
His faith revealed the living Christ.

When the R. E. Smith Building was formally opened on October 1, 1961, Dr. John B. Entriakin of the Centenary College faculty and a close friend of Dean Smith was the speaker. His opening remarks are here recorded:

"We who are here represent many thousands of persons who desire to pay special tribute to Dean Robert Edward Smith, a 20th century apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Among us he has been a truly great professor, the inspiring teacher of the famous Four Square Bible Class, a dynamic lecturer, and all-in-all a most



effective Christian gentleman. I am personally pleased that this building is to be called a Religious Activity Building since Dean Smith by his teaching and example emphasized that religion involves activity, and is not merely a creed to be accepted but is related to all affairs of life".

### **When the Shadows Deepen**

After his retirement from the Four Square Bible Class in September 1960, the last five years of Dean Smith's life were restricted by the infirmities of old age and the onset of related illnesses. Perhaps the poet Browning was expressing a youthful wish when he wrote, "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be". The Psalmist may be closer to the truth: "The years of our life are three score and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet this span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away".

Although a newspaper picture related to his retirement showed him in the yard of his home with a hoe in his hands, this was only a pose. Knowing that soon the words of Ecclesiastes, "the silver cord would be loosed, the golden bowl be broken," would be fulfilled in his own life, he turned to his study, his books and his pen with renewed vigor. Perhaps ringing in his ears were the words of Jesus: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work". These were also declining years for Mrs. Smith and the two were drawn even closer together across the bridge of suffering.

Mrs. Smith's daughter Margaret and her husband Glenn N. Walker, Jr. were always near at hand ready to serve their every need. Glenn Walker, Jr. was more than a son to Dean and Mrs. Smith in these difficult years. Dean Smith called upon him not only for many services related to his business affairs but also to share his thoughts as daylight began to fade. On certain days the Dean would say "I cannot discuss anything now. There is a curtain before my face. When I get to Heaven I am going to ask St. Peter why God let me stay on this earth so long".

Old age does have its peculiar blessings in wisdom, memory and honor, but our "earthly tabernacle" is subject to the ravages of time and longevity is fraught with many dangers.

During his last few years his friend and physician, Dr. L. Keith Mason, attended him and recognized the general deterioration of his health due largely to the infirmities of old age. But Dean Smith faced these conditions with Christian endurance and steadfast faith, and during his last trips to the hospital he requested that he be permitted to die without artificial life support systems that would prolong his suffering. Dr. Mason knew that Dean Smith had glimpsed the glories of a new life beyond the grave and was prepared to go. His family had known this for some time.

### **End of the Journey**

Some years before this date Dean Smith with loving care and deep spiritual

insight had made special arrangements for the family burial plot in a Shreveport cemetery. His first wife, Hester Thompson Smith, who preceded him in death, and his daughter, Hazel Irene, whose accidental death occurred May 9, 1928, were already interred in the family plot. After his marriage to Mrs. J. M. Henry he arranged for Dr. Henry's body to be moved to the same plot, and the general marker was inscribed "Smith-Henry". He also included in the plot a space for Mrs. Smith's sister, Miss Jane Gibbs, who was the last to be buried there. Mrs. Smith died three years after the passing of Dean Smith.

On September 10, 1965, early in the morning, Dean Smith died. The nurse who was with him in the hospital at that time heard him attempting to preach a sermon and then sing stanzas of a hymn. These were his last words. Did he remember his spiritual father John Wesley, who preached and sang Isaac Watts's hymn, "I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath," the evening he died? Then Mr. Wesley faltered in his speech and finally cried out: "The best of all is God is with us". Perhaps Dean Smith was singing the greatest hymn of Methodism written by Charles Wesley and listed as number one in the hymnal:

"OH for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of his grace!"

In his last Christmas message, knowing that life's twilight was deepening he wrote this significant testimony and credo:

"I've seen more than twice forty winters' sun return (quoting Burns) and I've had my share of trouble, but I can testify that life is **Good**, always better if we honestly try to do God's will and accept Christ as our Savior and guide. God's smile makes a glorious rainbow for my future. My faith is fixed, my anchor holds. I see my way as birds their trackless way. I shall arrive! I go into eternity 'a sinner saved by grace' to meet my Savior and my sainted loved ones".

The final rites for Dean Smith were held on the campus of Centenary College in the Brown Memorial Chapel. For over forty years this historic campus had been his academic home, and it was fitting and proper that here his body should lie in state until its final interment in Forest Park Cemetery.

Two of his former students were prominent in the service. His own pastor, Dr. D. L. Dykes, Jr. of the First Methodist Church in Shreveport, presided over the service, and Dr. B. C. Taylor, emeritus vice president of the college, delivered the final words of tribute before a great host of friends and former students. Dr. Taylor had been with Dean Smith at Ruskin College, Florida Southern College, and then accompanied him to Centenary where he graduated in 1922. In Dr. Taylor's tribute to his old friend and teacher he said:

"Dr. Smith found me as a country boy in the hills of Tennessee and inspired me to be a minister. He was a scholar and set a high standard of excellence for himself and his students. He was a great Bible teacher and its characters were real under his magic touch. He had a great faith and unfailing devotion to Christ and his church. He has crossed the great divide with a paean of victory. Hallelujah!"



The eight noble men who bore his casket to its final resting place were chosen from the membership of the Four Square Bible Class: Glenn Flournoy, J. S. Reily, J. M. Gorton, Henry Winegeart, Rea J. Fox, W. D. Smith, A. H. Bewley and B. W. Blanpied. We can but surmise their thoughts as they participated in this last ritual of love and devotion for their beloved friend and teacher. Perhaps they remembered the words read by the minister:

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens".

They left his body in the earth of Forest Park on that September day where soon the grassy slopes and falling leaves would welcome "Ole October" and the autumn winds whisper the secret of human existence: "When that which drew from out the boundless deep, turns again home"

### **Legacy**

Our story of the Dean Smith years at Centenary College and the Four Square Bible Class has ended, but there is a legacy from these recorded events that will forever flow into the stream of the future.

The R. E. Smith building on the campus of Centenary College is a useful legacy of brick and steel, housing the Department of Religion and all related activities. Dr. Webb Pomeroy, James Professor of Religion, is the living symbol of the Dean Smith teaching legacy.

The thousands of college students who moved through his classes, the hundreds of ministers who went forth inspired by his life and teachings, and the countless numbers of others who heard him in church training schools attest to his marvelous intellectual and spiritual influence in their lives.

The Four Square Bible Class is the legacy so deeply intertwined with his life for more than forty years. It was in his relation to this group that his dual role of pastor and teacher, shepherd and counselor, prophet and evangelist, was so richly fulfilled. It continues in every sense of the word as a part of the Church, the Body of Christ, the Word in the World. The teachers of this class are in the tradition of Dean Smith, and those who make up its membership hold memories of the great man.

As one has so wisely observed all great institutions are but the lengthened shadow of great persons, and The Four Square Bible Class is the projection of such a person in Dean Robert Edward Smith. Those who enter its fellowship in years to come will know that it was his voice, his hand, and his spirit that wrought a great work for God and provided a rich legacy for unborn generations.





# FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTERS

## Chapter II

Dean Smith was retired from the Louisiana Annual Conference of the Methodist Church November 15, 1946 at the mandatory age of 72.

He retired from the faculty of Centenary College May 14, 1949.

He retired from his teaching position in the Four Square Bible Class September 1, 1960.

In the newspaper report of Dean Smith's death September 10, 1965 it was stated that he was a Thirty-Second degree Scottish Rite Mason and a charter member of the Kiwanis Club.

## Chapter III

One of Dean Smith's lectures in 1925 on the subject "The Old Rugged Cross" gave this interpretation of the meaning of the cross:

1. It reveals to us the heart of God and His love for the world.
2. It reveals the nature of sin, its growth from small things, its stealth and final victory over us.
3. It reveals our duty to God. We should live for Him, devote our whole life to Him rather than make a sacrifice of some small thing.

## Chapter IV

I remember when my trunk with only a few clothes in it was piled on the mule wagon at Tennessee City in 1909 on my way to Ruskin Cave College. I crossed that creek many times sitting on trunks and at times walking behind the mules who knew the way to the college and I didn't (fifty miles west of Nashville).

One of the most remarkable things at your college was the fact that we heard you each morning at chapel bringing a brand new message each time fresh and interesting. You always urged us preachers to bring a new message each time we preached.

Robert Allen  
First Methodist Church  
St. Petersburg, FL  
(September 7, 1945)

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A newspaper report by Elmer Hinton states that in 1894 Ruskin Cooperative Association was founded on a one thousand acre tract of land on Yells Creel Road in Dickson County, Tennessee. In 1904 Reverend R. E. Smith founded Ruskin Cave College on the site. This college listed things prohibited as "firearms



cards or vicious games, profanity, vulgarity, boisterous laughing, conversing with the opposite sex — politeness everywhere - courtship nowhere.”

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I enrolled as a charter student in Meridan Male College. I remember Clinton Foreman coming around with an oil can to replenish our lamps, and how we went to the woods to chop our winter's supply of fuel, and how we primed the old pump on the back porch on those cold winter mornings.

Willis Germany  
Wesley Methodist Church  
Shawnee, OK  
(September 8, 1945)

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I shall never forget the days in early autumn of 1902 when we first met as charter students with teachers to undertake the future of Meridan Male College: Professor Holston, R. E. Smith and wife Hester, E. A. Roades, O. W. Boland, L. P. Brown, and others.

Joe N. Rawlins  
(September 14, 1945)

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To me the character of Ruskin Cave College is best symbolized by her natural setting. The tree covered hills, the cliff, the cave and the pool, the flowing spring and yellow creek; all are symbolic of the friendliness, dependability, sincerity, initiative, strength and durability that your college attempted to develop in her students.

E. G. Robertson  
Newton, KN  
(September 15, 1945)

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Dr. John L. Scales was president of the Business Men's Bible Class in 1920-21 when Dean Smith began teaching the class. It was fitting and proper that he should be present for the opening of the R. E. Smith Building representing the alumni of Centenary College, the Board of Trustees and the earliest president of the Four Square Bible Class.

## Chapter V

An ad in the Four Square Herald in 1925 from the Triple A Grocery and



Market, 1806 Texas, offered the following: Country eggs - 37¢ per dozen, sweet potatoes - 10¢ per pound, milk - 15¢ per quart, buttermilk - 10¢ per quart.

## Chapter VII

James S. Reily wrote a summary of Dean Smith's life in 1929 (based on his many conversations with the Dean). In the Four Square Bulletin of December 15 he writes:

"Music and art both play a large part in Dr. Smith's happiness. In his early life he played several musical instruments, and at one time was the director of a band. He is most appreciative of harmony and beauty whether found in nature, painting, sculpture, architecture or music.

"Full of fun, one never sees this scholarly leader depressed or irritated. The comic and sports section of newspapers and magazines receive his first attention."

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In 1956 Dean Smith lectured to a church-community gathering on the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is an indication of his keen interest in all new Biblical research and zeal to continue growing and learning in his chosen vocation.

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The Christian churches are still divided in the matter of Biblical interpretation. Some hold to the literal meaning of all words of the Bible and a belief in the verbal inspiration of all parts equally. They believe that there are no errors of any kind in the Bible and that every statement therein must be binding on all believers regardless of circumstances.

The more liberal groups see the Bible as a whole containing the word of God revealed on different levels with some parts more useful than others. They ask certain critical questions such as: Who wrote this book? To whom was it written and for what immediate purpose? What is the date of the writing and what political, social and religious conditions influenced the writer? What oral or written sources did the author have at his disposal? Those who make this approach see the Bible as containing poetry, parables, allegories, myths, history, visions, sermons and other types of literary forms which the authors used to convey a religious and spiritual message.

## Chapter VIII

In September, 1928 while teaching in a training school in Tampa, Florida, Dean Smith experienced a hurricane that blew in from the Atlantic. He was shaken

up, but not hurt.

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On October 6, 1940, while Glenn N. Walker was President, the class observed the 20th anniversary of Dean Smith's relation to the class as teacher. This would indicate that the Business Men's Bible Class of that date was the same group of men who in 1923 changed the name of the class to the Four Square Bible Class. These facts would establish the beginning date of the Four Square Bible Class in the year 1920, and Dean Smith's first lesson on October 6 of that year. When the class celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1973, it was actually 53 years old.

## **Chapter IX**

The Evangelistic Committee arranged for Sunday afternoon visits to various communities in Louisiana and Texas. Pat Townsley was Chairman of the committee. The Four Square Glee Club accompanied the delegations.

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The William Jennings Bryan Bible Class in Miami, Florida boasted a membership of 6,000 in 1924-25, the largest on record.

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Another class involved in an attendance contest in 1929 was the East Dallas Christian Church.

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Dr. C. E. Green, a colleague of Dean Smith in Centenary College, was a regular substitute teacher in the early years of the Four Square Bible Class. He was a popular and entertaining speaker throughout the community. C. O. Holland, during his term in 1938-39 as president of the class was also the regular substitute teacher. At this time Mr. Holland was vice-president of Centenary College.

While the Four Square Herald was being published in 1927-28 Dr. C. E. Green was a regular contributor to the editorial section.

## **Chapter X**

The Annual Barbeque for 1930 was held at the Fair Grounds on May 29, beginning at 3:00 p.m. in the form of a Country Fair benefit for Camp Margaret. Dr. George Sexton was master of ceremonies. Sheriff T. R. Hughes and Fire

Chief Flores were in charge of grounds. Mayor L. E. Thomas gave the opening address. At 3:30 there was an air circus, followed by boxing and wrestling. At 5:00 o'clock there was a ball game between husbands and wives. At 8:30, after the barbeque feast, there was a band concert. At 9:30 there was a men's bathing beauty contest and the day was concluded with a big fireworks display.

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In 1932 the list of class property included the following items: A telephone, typewriter, mimeograph machine, duplicator, filing cabinet, file cases, printed forms and stationery, song books, piano, platform and pulpit, flower stands, bass drums, tables, collection baskets, wooden display signs, flags and a wooden offering box. The class maintained an office in the First Methodist Church and employed a secretary.

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Class presidents have always served only one year and at the end of that period an engraved plaque is presented to each. A Four Square ring was available for each president for a purchase price. The records show that Dave Corey was presented a ring at the end of his year as president.

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On January 31, 1932, in the absence of Dean Smith, Dr. Gerald L. K. Smith lectured before the Four Square Bible Class on the subject, "Victories and Hazards of Christian Civilization". The lecture was recorded by two stenographers and later distributed in mimeograph form. It was a long, rambling discourse filled with bombast typical of his later political speeches. After a long career in politics and religion, he came to Eureka Springs, Arkansas and developed a tract of land into a replica of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and sponsored annual productions of the Passion Play.

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The official Four Square Class roll published November 7, 1933 gives a list of 466 names.

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The Four Square Bible Class has had its historians, reporters, advertising agents, photographers, stenographers, tape recorders and poets. W. R. Kerr was one of the class poets and gave us this literary gem entitled The Old Time Four Square. We quote a few stanzas:



And speaking of the Four Square personnel.  
Time and space are required to tell  
Of men of distinction and upper brass  
That sprang from the membership of the Class.  
Two Governors, one Senator, one M C.  
One Assessor, one Sheriff, Commissioners three

There were men of every walk of life,  
From Huey Long to Barney Fife.  
There was Mayor Thomas, and Sheriff Hughes,  
There were Catholics, Protestants, Gentiles and Jews,  
There were men from China and Japan,  
And Dean Smith back from the Holy Land.

There was Chief Dennis Bazer of the local police.  
And other officers of law and peace.  
Judge Samuel of the Police Court,  
Gave the Four Square his support.  
He filled the speaker's stand one day,  
When the regular speaker was away.

And Dave, as many people knew  
Was not a Gentile, he was a Jew.  
But regardless of creed or clan,  
You never knew a finer man.  
Dave was honest and as good as gold.  
And may God have mercy on his soul.

And among other men about town  
Was a sort of a lawyer named Percy Browne.  
Percy was President of the Class.  
And ranked among its topmost brass.  
Percy was a good old boy.  
And brought his friends abundant joy.

Among the Classes leading men,  
There was one we all called Glen.  
Nature never formed but one such boy,  
And broke the die in casting  
Glen Flourney. His personality was complete.  
He put the Four Square on its feet.

In March, 1928 Governor Elect Huey Long was welcomed back to the Four Square Bible Class with a standing ovation. Later the Shreveport community was not so friendly to Huey Long.

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In 1938 on Masonic Day Robert F. Kennon of Minden, Louisiana was the teacher of the Four Square Bible Class. Here we add another famous name to the list as later he was to be Governor of Louisiana.

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The first annual barbeque was held in 1923 at Hammett's plantation on Harts Island Road.

Other picnic and barbeque sites were Robson, Louisiana. Hamel's farm. The Texaco Club and finally Ray Oden's Myrtle Hill Plantation.

## **Chapter XI**

Among the visiting teachers of the Four Square Bible Class in the absence of Dean Smith were Dr. E. D. Soper of Duke University, Reverend Burke Culpepper, Reverend John E. Brown of Siloam Springs, Arkansas; Dr. Dan Poling, and Dr. George S. Sexton.

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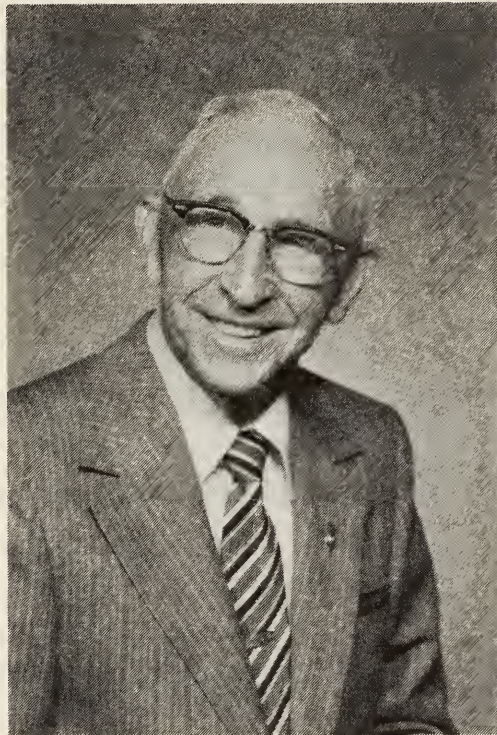
In 1937 a committee of ladies was appointed to find a Scoutmaster for troop 26. Evidently the men had failed and as so often in the work of the church they had to depend on the women. This committee was composed of Mrs. R. E. Smith, Mrs. T. E. Hodges and Mrs. A. G. Blanchard. They were successful and the Scout troop was saved.

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Another item of property belonging to the Four Square Bible Class was a public address system purchased in 1971. Faithful member Ray Collins is the custodian of this property and is responsible for recording the lessons on tape on special occasions.

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Axel Swanson is listed as the first president of the Four Square Bible Class serving in 1923-24. However, Dean Smith started teaching the class in October, 1920 when it was known as the Business Men's Bible Class and Dr. John L. Scales was the president. No president has served more than one year, and the class has always had outstanding leadership.



**Percy Browne**

In 1978 Percy Browne was one of the two charter members still active in the class. (Jas. S. Reily is the other). He along with his wife Honora is a regular attendant and is regarded as the elder statesman of the class. He was the sixth president of the Four Square Bible Class (1928-29).

## **Chapter XII**

On November 28, 1929 a monument to departed members was unveiled with Dr. Geo. Sexton speaking. Names of those deceased were: Dan R. Herndon, Geo. Monsour, C. G. Carpenter, J. H. Adger, C. W. Page, J. H. Ross, James P. Creswell, J. E. Hughes, T. M. Hall, Ben Key, W. T. Hunt, L. H. Mathis, H. P. Weber, F. N. Brown, F. H. Tenney, C. W. Hardy, V. M. Crutsinger and D. B. Stutsman.



### **Chapter XIII**

In his Signs-O-The Times Dean Smith makes many predictions. In his paragraph on Women Preachers, after the Methodist Church in 1956 had granted ministerial status to women, he states that this is a good step but will prevent us from **ever** uniting with the Episcopal Church. But only twenty years later the Episcopal church began to ordain women. Indeed, "future shock" had already arrived and sped past his generation!

### **Chapter XIV**

After 33 years as a Methodist minister, Dean R. E. Smith was retired from the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Church November 15, 1946.

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Centenary College established an R. E. Smith Award in 1950 to be given each year to the student who is most outstanding in Christian leadership. Churches and individuals contributed to this endowment fund.

## A Poetic Tribute to Dean R. E. Smith

We who have walked with you  
And seen your walk with God,  
Are impelled to speak  
Of what it has meant to us  
Across the years.

Your life is like a deep, deep well.  
It is like a treasure chest  
Filled with the precious gems of the ages  
Penned by philosophers and sages.

It is like a sacrament  
Falling like a benediction on all  
Who come within the orbit  
Of your presence.

And we, who have received so freely  
Of the bounty of your life  
And are enriched beyond measure,  
Thank you from full hearts  
For your splendid sharing  
Of "The Way"  
With us.

- Mrs. Clarence Day

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In 1964 a portrait of Dean Smith was unveiled. This was a gift from the Ministerial Alumni Association of the college and Rev. W. D. Boddie was the president. Those taking part in the chapel ceremony on that occasion were Bishop Aubrey Walton, President Jack Wilkes, Vice President B. C. Taylor, Dr. Webb Pomeroy and Mrs. R. E. Smith.

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At the time of Dean Smith's death when the family went into his study they found on his desk among many books, notes and papers, The Christian Advocate, U.S. News and World Report, Upton Sinclair's Autobiography, and a well worn Holy Bible. His reading glass lay nearby. To the very last he was an eager student.

"No work begun shall ever pause at death."

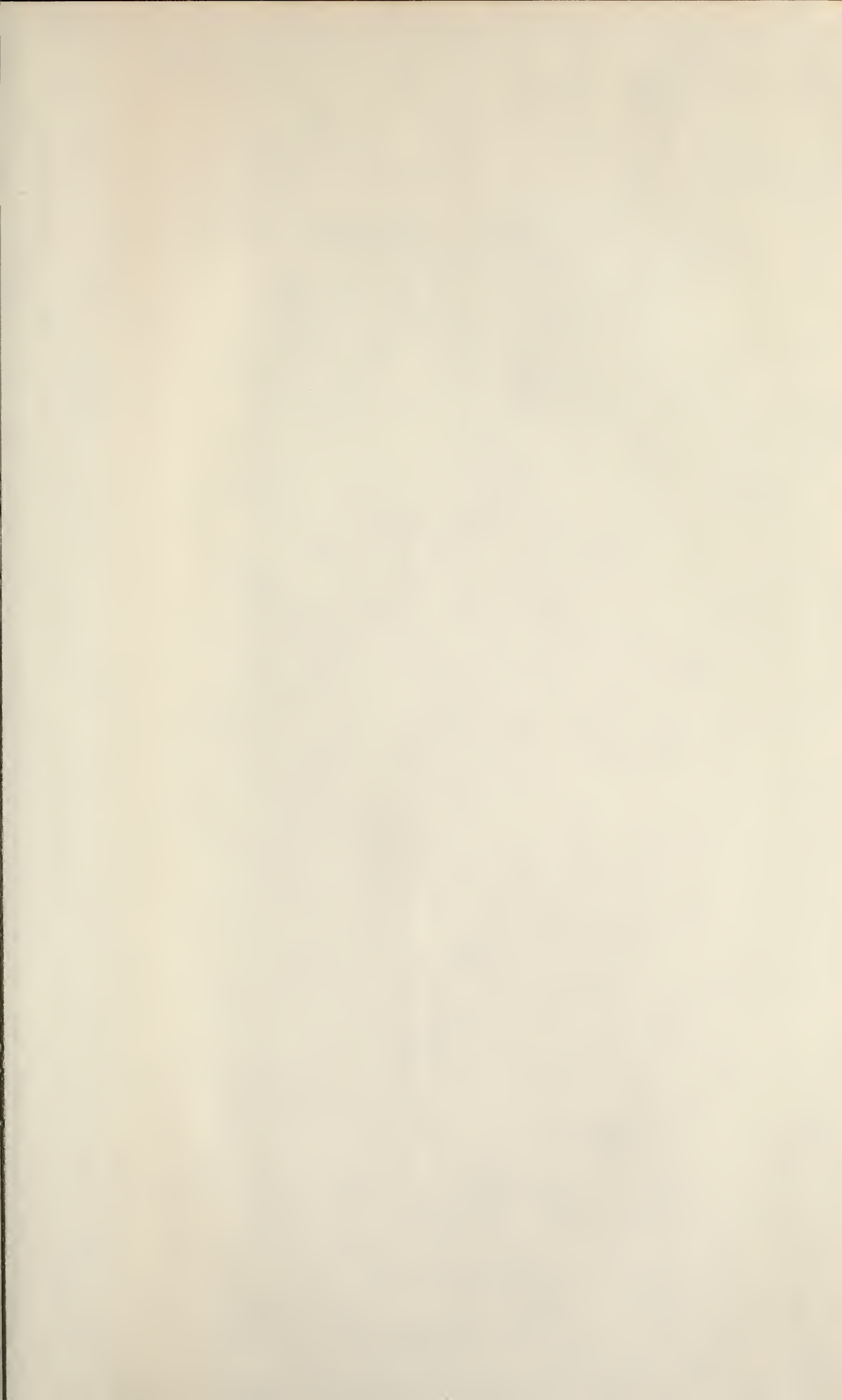
Browning















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